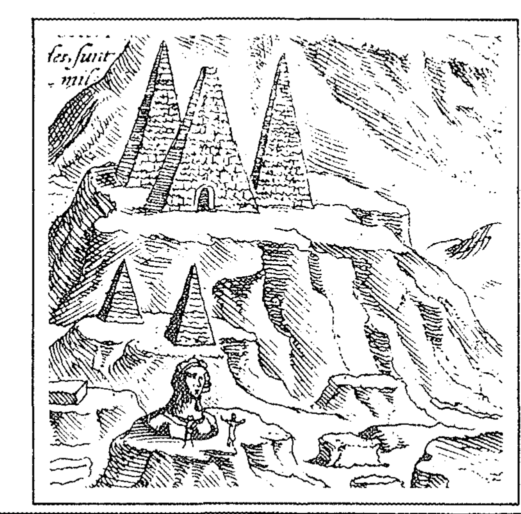
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القاهرة CAIRO القاهرة

Cairo is certainly not a city that offers itself up easily to the appreciation of tourists who are generally passing through on their way to the spectacular archeological sites which begin at the very gates of the city and can be seen rising at the end of unencumbered avenues. Moreover, the old city is not adapted to the requirements of groups of tourists. Apart from the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities (which no one can deny is one of the richest in the world), it is only sites such as al Azhar and its nearby bazaar, the Citadel and the recent Mohammad Ali mosque that appear therefore on the programme of the rapid visitor.

More so than any other city perhaps, this one needs to be revealed by a series of itineraries which would, nevertheless, only begin to touch upon the riches of its streets, its network of tiny alleys, the variety of its squares, gates, monuments, palaces, and passageways; the same applies to the diversity of Cairo's urban patterns, which reflect successive cities that have transformed a site bordered by the desert, hills, cities of the Dead and the Nile, natural sources or richness for Egypt. A recent edition of the Cahier de la Recherche Architecturale[1] *already invited us to discover the city of Cairo, however partially.*

This guide[2] offers us further encouragement for discovery, although it is clearly too brief for a city of 12 million inhabitants. It has been meticulously put together, with sound historical documenting, by Sawsan Noweir, architect, historian and researcher at the I.F.A. and A.D.R.O.S., and who is also involved in a Cairo "Workshop" with Jean-Charles Depaule, Philippe Panerai and Mona Zakariya. Ms. Noweir was assisted for those parts dealing with 19th century transformations of Cairo, by Mercedes Volait, who is also an architect and researcher at A.D.R.O.S and at the CEDEJ. (A recent article by Ms. Volait appeared in MIMAR 13*) — Pierre Clément, Institut français d'Architecture, Paris.*

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The seventh century: Fustāt

The Arabs arrived in Egypt in 640 A.D. and founded their capital some 20 kilometres south of the tip of the delta, on a site where the Muqattam Mountains came closest to the Nile. 'Amr-Ibn-Al-As, the commander-in-chief of the Calif Omar's army, chose the site of the town on the banks of the Nile and in close proximity to the Byzantine fortress of Babylon. The town was built around a central core, the 'Amr Mosque (built in 641-42 A.D.), around which the conquerors settled. Then, ethnic settlements, each with their own sanctuaries, were formed on the periphery. The first Arab town took the form of a military camp, though lacking in fortifications — hence the name Fustāt (a camp). It consisted of three gates, situated in the north, the east and the south, market places and a mosque, which primarily served as a place of worship but was at the same time used as a watch-tower, a meeting hall and a court of justice. Fustāt very rapidly developed into the administrative capital of the region and engulfed the ancient City of Babylon within its urban confines.

Though Fustāt was the first Arab town in the region, it was however not the first to occupy that site. Due to its strategic position, its geographic characteristics and its proximity to the Nile, the site had long before been considered an important one. This thoroughfare of all Asian invasions gave the towns in this region their omnipresent military characteristics. In the south, on the site of a fortress in Ancient Egypt, Roman Emperor Trajan had, between 98-117 A.D. built fortifications and the Fort of Babylon, which the Arabs called 'Dasr al Shami'; it was thus through the mispronunciation of the older name 'Pi-Hapi-n-on', that the name Babylon came to be used. Situated directly on the banks of the River Nile, this important town of the Greek and Roman era, boasted a port, two kilometres of dockland and was joined to the Red Sea by a canal, which had previously existed in Ancient Egypt. Further south, about twenty kilometres from Babylon on the west bank of the Nile, stood Memphis; Memphis had been the capital of the old empire and was one of the oldest and the most important towns of Egypt; it contained the Temple of the God Ptah, a royal palace and white impressive fortifications. It was also the seat of government. Though Memphis did not always retain its status as a capital, it nevertheless remained an important town, which was partly due to its strategic location between Lower and Upper Egypt.



Within this same region and during the same era, there was also Heliopolis — or 'Ain Shams — the holy city of Ancient Egypt. As the capital city of one of the regions in Lower Egypt, Heliopolis had, for a very long time, played an undeniably important role. Its temple (of which there only remains an obelisk) had been the oldest and the most important temple devoted to the worship of the Sun.

The two cities of Memphis and Heliopolis had, from the time of the Pharaohs, been linked by a route that was bordered with Sphinx. This road passed close to the fortress and the site that was later to become Babylon. This historic path played a very important role in the formation and the development of all the towns in this area; it showed the way to foreign invaders, and allowed for commerce and communication with Asia. Between the seventh and

1. "Espaces et formes de l'Orient arabe", *No. 10-11 presented by Catherine Bruant, Jean-Charles Depaule. See specifically contributions on Cairo by Robert Ilbert. Heddaya Machhour and Mona Zakariya.*
2. *In the same series, see* Peking *No. 79, October 1983 and* Algiers, *No. 85, April 1984.*
3. *Workshop in the "Oriental Cities" programme. See supplement to the I.F.A.* Bulletin *No. 80, 1983, Atelier du Caire, 1, Charaibi Street (in French and Arabic).*

* The nilometer is an apparatus with a system for measuring the different levels of the Nile River during periods of flooding.

the tenth century, this path established the means of inter-communication between towns, and from the tenth century onwards, it became the principal artery of the Fātimid capital and was the axis along which the town expanded. By the seventh century, the commander-in-chief of the Arab army had therefore not founded the first town in an ahistorical region; it was a site which was to witness a succession of towns and capital cities and finally give birth to one of the largest metropolises of the world today.

The eighth century: Al-'Askar

In 750 the political situation changed; the Ommayades were overthrown by the 'Abbāsids. When the 'Abbāsid army reached Egypt, they abandoned Fustāt and founded al-'Askar (the cantonment) in an area called 'Al Hamra al Kuswa', in the north of Fustāt. A new cluster of settlements was formed around the 'Dar al-Imārah (the governor's palace) and around the mosque (which was built in 785 and of which there is no trace today). The military town of al-'Askar spread out around this core composed of large buildings, numerous market places and houses built in regular patterns. The new city expanded, and like Fustāt acquired the character of a big town, maintaining at the same time two distinct centres — the seat of power at al-'Askar, and the centre for social activities at Fustāt.

The ninth century: al-Qatā'i

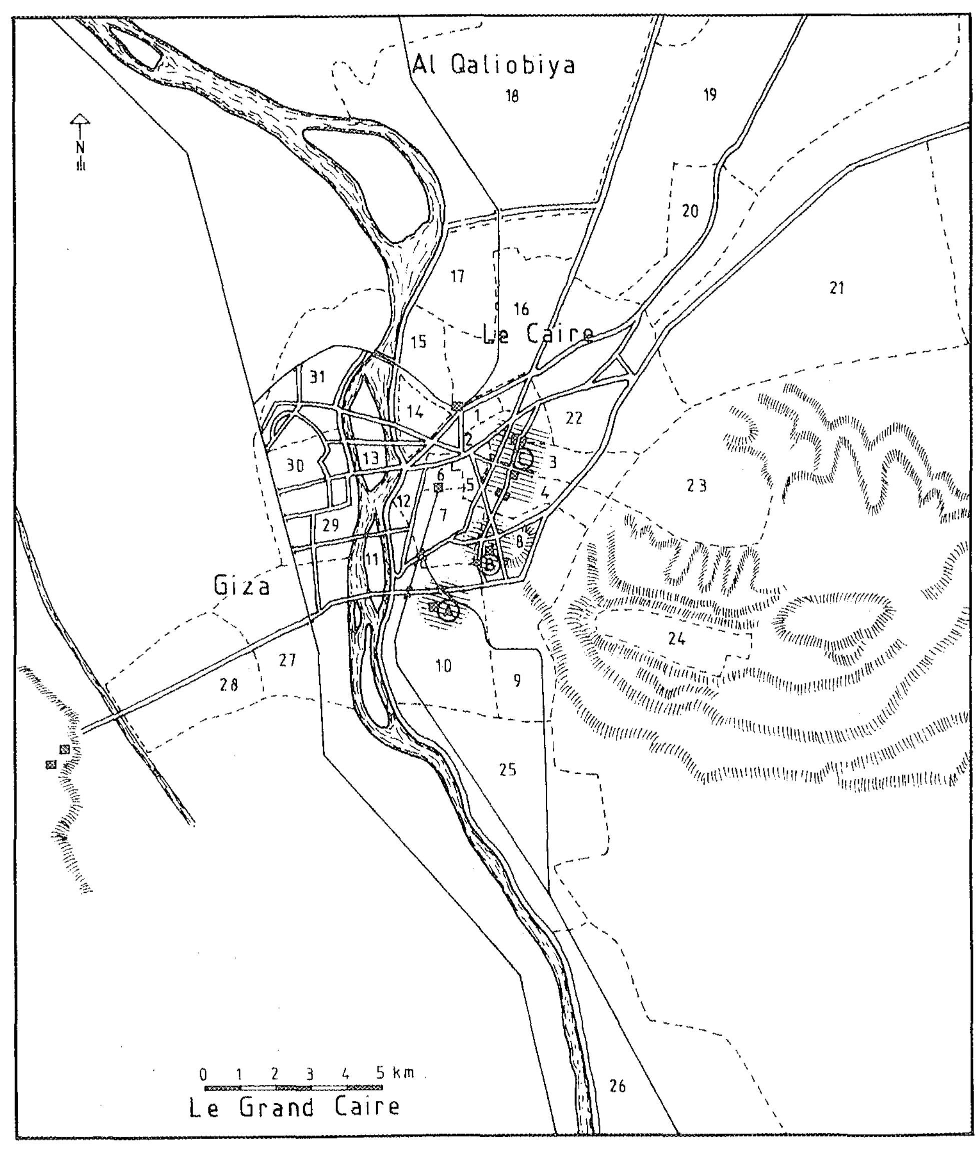
The year 868 announced a new era and more changes. The new settlement of al-Qatā'i was established around a colossal mosque in the North East, on the Yuchkar heights between al-'Askar and the existing citadel. The town took its name from the fact that the land in the area had been distributed in the form of allotments amongst the troops and palace officials. Though al-Qatā'i was not fortified, its mosque with its high walls and its circular parth as in a fortress, gave it a military character.

A large castle was built on the heights of Muquattam, at the foot of which stood a large Maydan (a square or a race course), with a big boulevard linking the two to the mosque of Ibn Tulun. The town, then, had an area of nearly 1 sq. mile. The northward extension of the town and the construction of the castle were signs that the town was expanding in that direction, and very soon al-Qatā'i and al-'Askar, that had previously been but sectors of Fustāt, merged into one single town.

From the time that Fustāt was founded through to 960 when the Fātimid arrived and al-Qāhira was founded, the towns expanded northwards along the historical axis. Most often this extension came about when the principal core and the centre of power, i.e.: the mosque, the governor's residence and the homes of the elites changed place. These then went on to form the next clusters of settlement. This process was however equally influenced by the geographical configuration of the region and the role played by the Nile. After the Arab conquest, the Nile river bed changed its course a number of times — each time directly affecting the town. In the seventh century it came as far as Qasr al Sham flooding the 'Amr Mosque. The town had two bridges, one in the north at Al Maqs (directly on the banks of the Nile where Bab al Hadid stood), and the second at Misr to the north of the old Babylon. There was only one island (Rawdah) which was linked to Misr by a bridge.

About ten years after the Arab conquest, the Nile shifted towards the west leaving open land around the fortress, on which new constructions rose. The Nile then ran much further to the east than today, and the present Ibn Tulun area lay submerged under water, which is what gave it its wealthy suburban features. This area today stands at about one kilometre of the Nile. The dried and filled up marshlands that existed in the fourteenth century bear witness to the constant erosions of the river bed.

During the eighth century, the Nile changed its course once more, this time pulling further to the west. At this time there were four islands: the isle of Tawdah which faced Fustāt, the isle of Jazīraha little further to the north, the isle of Būlaq in the north east (which later became part of the mainland), and finally the isle of al-Fil. The reclaimed land was put to use stage by stage. First it stood as islands in the middle of the river. Later the waterways separating them from the mainland got out off from the principal river bed causing them to dry up and become part of the mainland — only when the river swelled did this area go under water. They therefore came to be known as Birkat (swamps or marshland). Large country houses were built around these marshes and this was to be the start of urbanisation. Then the swamps were dried or filled up and they became gardens and orchards, and in the process they were further split up by the canals and the irrigation systems. Plots of land were left as they stood and large mansions with gardens were built on them. Others were cut up and used for building smaller homes. This explains how at the end of the nineteenth century, the city of Ismail (the present city centre) came into being on a land that had witnessed the upheavals of the seventh century.



1. Azbakiya
2. Bal al Charriya
3. Gamaliya
4. Darb al Ahmar
5. Mousky
6. Abdine
7. Sayida Zainab
8. Ibn Tūlūn
9. Al Khalifa
10. Misr al Qadima (Od Cairo)
11. Roda
12. Qasr al Nil
13. Zamalek
14. Boulaq
15. Rod al Farag
16. Choubra
17. Al Sahel
18. Choubra al Khayma
19. Matariya
20. Zaitoun
21. Héliopolis
22. Al Waiyli
23. Madinet Nasr
24. Madinet al Moqattam
25. Maadi
26. Helouan
27. Giza
28. Pyramides
29. Dokki
30. Aguza
31. Embaba

A. Fustāt (640)
B. Al Qata'i (868)
C. Al Qahira (969)

The tenth century: al Qāhira (Cairo)

In July 969, Al Mu'izz arrived in Egypt with the Fātimid army coming from Tunisia. He settled in the north of the three towns that had previously been built by the Arabs. This was the start of a long period, which culminated in the construction of a town of imperial proportions. Djawhar, the Fātimid Vizir, was given the task of creating this new town. This new city was to be named Mişr Al Dahira (the triumphant).

The site chosen by the Fātimids stood mid-way between Fustāt and 'Ain Shams. The historical path that linked 'Ain Shams to the old Babylon went through the length of this site. Places such as Omm Dounien, next to Al Maqs (which had served as Amar's army's first camp site during the seventh century) already existed. There were also some constructions such as the large park called 'The Cafour Gardens' with its menagerie and stables. The garden, which was to room one of the Fātimid palaces, stretched as far as the canal, which flowed on the west. There was also a convent belonging to the Copts and a small village, Basr al Chouq (which has lent its name to a sector, that still exists today, in the north-eastern section of the old town).

The new town was built on a practically square shaped plot of land about a mile away from the river. The town's boundaries were defined by natural landmarks: on the east rose the Muqattam heights, on the west, the canal (the Khalij had originally been a silted up tributary of the Nile, which from the Ancient days had been turned into a canal connecting Babylon to the Red Sea), Al Djabal al Ahmar were in the north and the towns of Fustāt and al-Qatā'i in the south.

The city of al-Qāhira was constructed on the basis of a well thought-out plan. Parallel to the canal, through the length of the town, ran a wide road with a series of side-streets cutting across and leading towards the canal. The town was made up of two

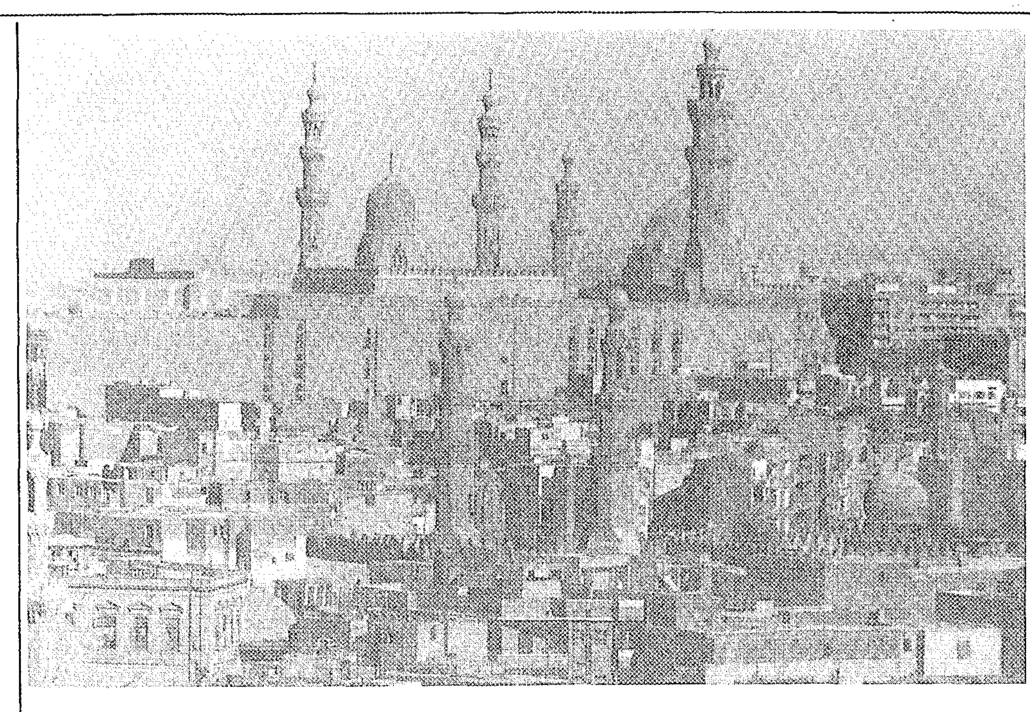
parts: one to the west of the main axis, the other to the east. The section of the street that ran between the two palaces was called 'Bien al Qasrine' (the street between two palaces). The street in its entirety was called 'Qasbat al Qāhira'. The town contained two mosques, one in the north — the al Hakim — and the other in the south — the al'Azhar - as well as houses and mansions belonging to princes and dominant castes. Al-Qāhira, very quickly took on the characteristics of a fortified town — a feature that had so far been unprecedented. On the western side a wall bordered the Khalij, which in turn served as a ditch. The name of the road, 'Bien al Sourien' (road between two walls), which has survived to this day, seems to indicate that there were probably two walls. The surrounding walls of the town comprised of several gates: in the north the Bab al-Fūtuh and the Bab al Nasr, in the south the Bab Zuwayla and in the west the Bab al Mahrong. Several bridges linked al-'Qāhira to the other parts of the town: the al Qantra, which crossed the Khalij and joined the Fātimid town to the old port of al-Maqs, and the other (which had already been there) connected Fustāt to the isle of Rawdah. The town of al-Qāhira had certain uncommon features. Already the fact that it was a fortified residential town constructed around the residential palace, distinguished it greatly from previous towns. The mosque had lost its importance and was no longer the central core around which the town developed. Under the Fātimids, the mosque was no longer considered the centre of political and religious power. This had somewhat shifted towards the residential palace. In return, the mosque was situated either in the north or the south of the town. This change can be explained by the fact that the Fātimids were a Shi'ite foreign power from Tunisia, who felt hostile to the traditions set previously by the Sunnite Califs and so wanted to impose great changes.

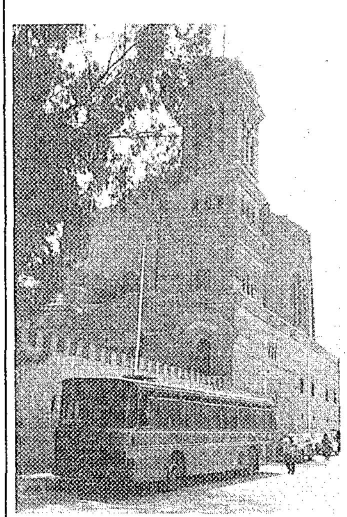
The town of Fustāt was not neglected and continued to grow. The Persian traveller, Nasir-I-Khrosrow in the tenth century described its market place, which stood next to the 'Amr mosque, as the richest in the world. He also spoke of the height of the buildings and described having seen gardens built onto the roof of seven storey houses as well as narrow streets with beautiful protruding constructions. Al-Qāhira expanded very rapidly and overran its limits. The surrounding wall of the town was extended and rebuilt by Badr and Gamali to encompass the new clusters of settlements in the north and the south of the old wall. The three gates, Bab al-Nasr, Bal al Fūtūh in the north and Bab Zuwaylah in the south were rebuilt. In spite of a new rampart, a new sector called Husaynīyah emerged in the north on the other side of the Bab al Fūtūh wall. In the south the town of Fustāt also continued to grow.

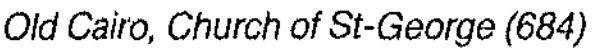
The twelfth century: The Cairo of Ṣalāh al-Dīn.

The arrival of Ṣalah al-Dīn in 1176 opened up a new chapter in the history of the development of the city of Cairo. From this period on, it was no longer the town that changed location, but the seat of political power. The city of Cairo, while in full expansion and overflowing its own walls, gained full stability. Ṣalah al-Dīn abandoned the seat of Shi'ite power in the very heart of Cairo in order to construct a real fortress, Al Qala'a (the Citadel), on the Muqattam Heights to the south of the Fātimid town. Egypt had only just emerged from the Crusades, which underlined the necessity of having the town or the towns fortified by walls. And for the first time a project to enclose all the towns within the same walls was proposed (and for the first time) this enclosure was to boast of true fortifications. The project had foreseen a prolongation of the eastern wall as far as Muqattam and the extension of the fortifications eastward as far as the Nile and along the river up to the fort of Qasr al Shami. A third wall was to join the east of Fustāt to the Citadel. All this work was not accomplished during Ṣalah al-Dīn's rule — only the northern section was extended as far as the Nile. The wall that was to link Fustāt to al-Qāhira was never finished and the other, which was to run alongside the Nile, was never started.

The decision to install the military quarters and the seat of power in the citadel, which had become a



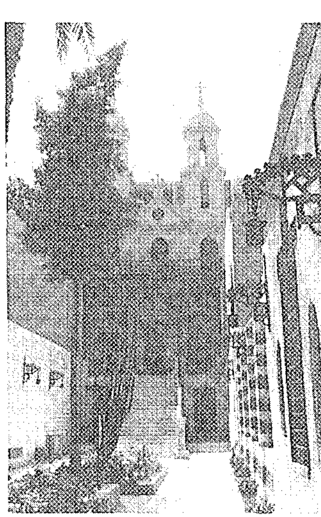




Old Cairo, Church of St-George (684)



Old Cairo, Church of St-Barbara (684)



Old Cairo, Church of al Moallaqa 7th C.

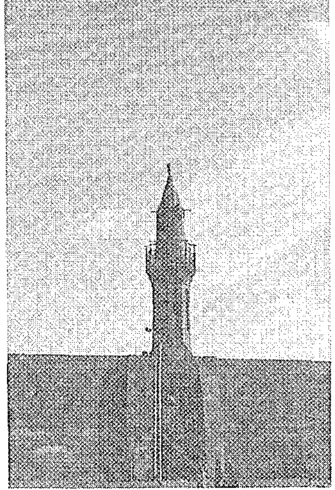
Amr



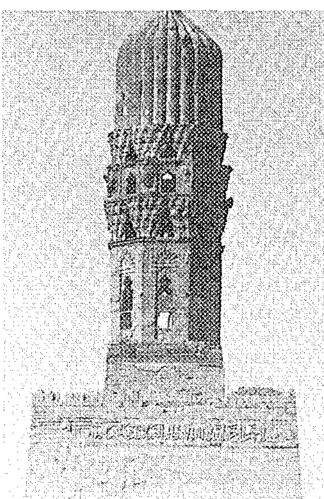
Al Hakim, 990.



Ibn Tūlūn, 876.

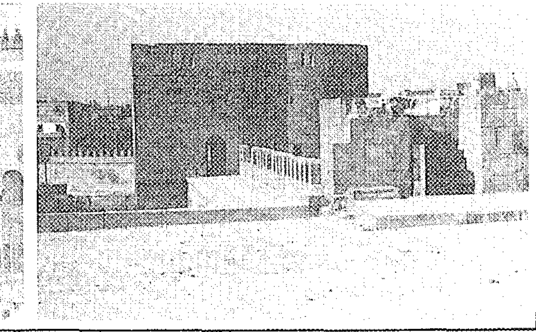


Mosque Al-Azhar, 970.



Salah Al Din fortress (1176)





real fortified castle, was a strategic one. But this was not the first construction to be erected on those heights. In the ninth century, the Tūlūnids had already built a castle with a race course at the foot of the hill. However, what Ṣalah al-Dīn had built was a true fortress including a garrison and residential quarters for the soldiers.

The achievements during the Ayyūbid era greatly affected the growth of the town. The emergence of the Citadel and the shifting of the seat of power towards the south as well as the unification of al-Qāhira and Fustāt caused the town to expand in that direction. This expansion continued later under the reign of the Mamluks and culminated only when all the land between Fustāt and al-Qāhira was built up. The town then spread uniformly in the south as far as Qasr al-Shami fort. The extension of the northern wall to the Nile also gave the town room to expand in a north-westernly direction. Further out, in the south-west in the mid-eighteenth century, Malik al Salih decided to build a castle and a fortress on the isle of Rawdah. The government dignitaries followed the Ayyūbid prince and the island became populated.

The thirteenth century: Mamluk Cairo

The Mamluk era, which lasted over three centuries, from 1250 to 1517, was an important period of construction and urbanisation for the city of Cairo. One could point to three distinct settlements: Al Qāhirah, the Citadel and Fustāt. The town witnessed an uninterrupted surge of construction within, and a massive expansion without. As it was mentioned before, the emergence of the Citadel in the south of the Fātimid town resulted in an expansion of the town in that direction. Important constructions sprung up between the Bab Zuwayla and the Citadel, around the Darb-al-Ahmar street. Still further to the south, the town extended to fill the region that stood between the Citadel and Fustāt, thus bringing the two conurbations closer together. In the north, al-Qāhira spilled over its boundaries, set during the Fātimid rule and an important district, called Hirsainniyya, emerged on the other side of the Bab al-Futuh and the northern wall. This important district continued to expand even later under the Ottoman rule. The expansion was always northwards along the historical axis. Sultan Baybars had, in 1266–69, built a large mosque in that district (whose only remnant today is its wall which stands in the Al Zahir district). In the west, the expansion of the town was equally considerable; large parts of the reclaimed land on the other side of the Khalij were built upon. In this land of marshes and canals, parcels of land were distributed amongst the emirs, who built large country houses and gardens.

The extension of the western part of the town started with constructions that developed around the two transversal axes, which connected the Fātimid town to the Khalij and beyond that to the Nile. In the north, the extension started from Bal al Shairiyya towards Bab al-Bahar and connected them to Būlāq; the other, in the south, started from Bab al Kharg towards Bab al-Lūg and terminated in the same port (Būlāq). This movement of expansion eventually developed around the marshes and the canals. The isle of Rawdah, on the west bank of the Nile also witnessed the spread of country houses and gardens.

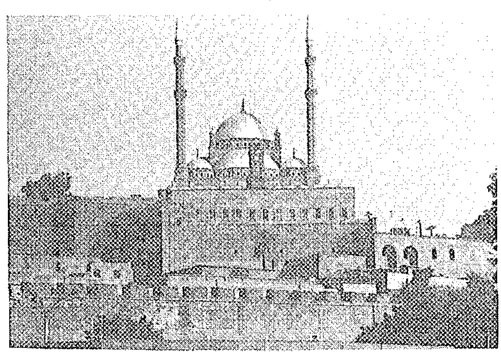
Inside the town, once the two Fātimid palaces had been destroyed (this demolition work had started under the 'Ayyubids), construction work mushroomed rapidly.

On the site of the two palaces, a number of buildings were erected of which many have survived and bear witness to the importance of architecture during that era. A large part of the west side of the existing Al Mu'izz street, (the present

Būlāq, Sinan Pacha Mosque, 1571



The Citadel, Mohammad Ali Mosque

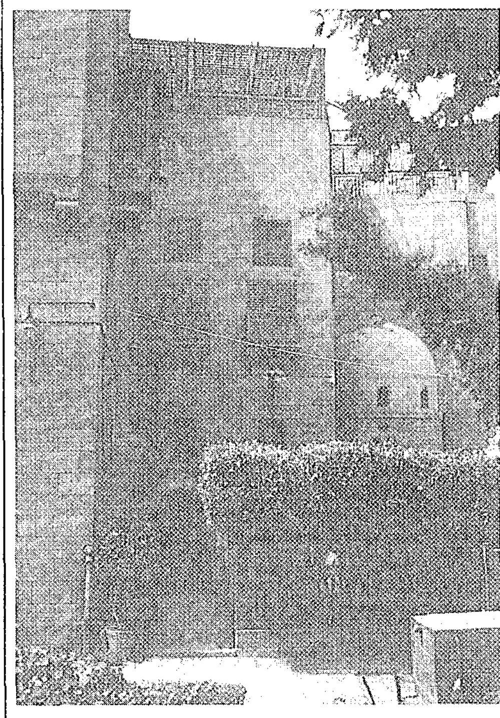


The Citadel

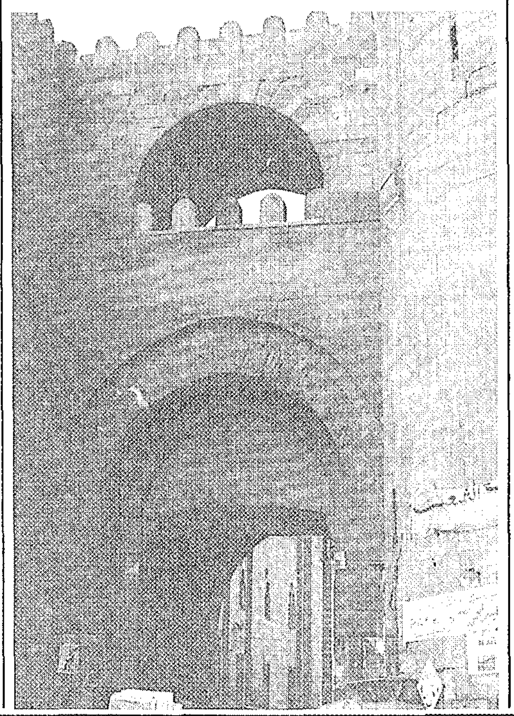
From the twelfth century onwards, the site on which the Citadel stood gained importance. This spot continued to represent the seat of power throughout the Mamluk and the Ottoman era up until the arrival of Mohammad Ali. The Citadel was comprised of three adjoining and distinct sections, each enclosed by a rampart and watch-towers. The construction of the Citadel began in 1167 and was finished in 1207. It contained a castle, a palace with its annex buildings, where the sultan held audience, armeries, stables and houses. During the Mamluk era, the sultans Beibars, Qalāwūn and Nasir Muhammed, added many other buildings to the town. The Qalāwūn mosque (1318–35) has survived until today.

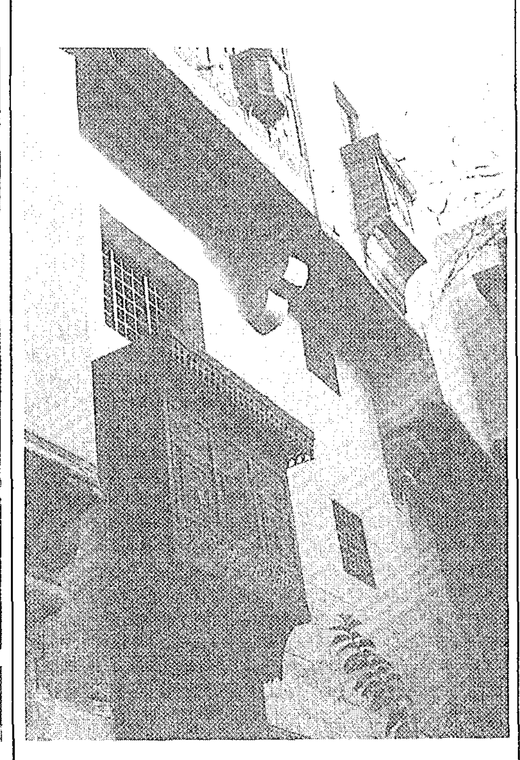
The provision of water was ensured through two wells and an aqueduct which was diverted from the Nile at the tip of the Khalij (the existing Fun al-Khalij) to reach the Citadel. The Ottoman Turks also brought about considerable changes in one section of the enclosure and rearranged certain of the buildings. Later, in the nineteenth century, Mohammad Ali destroyed a large section of the old palace in order to build his mosque.

Bayt al-Kiridliya, 1631

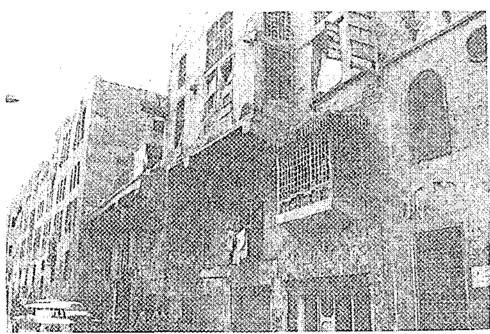


Bab Zuwaylah, 1092





Bayt as-Sihaynū, 1648–1796



Mohammad Ali Street



Al-Mu'izz street, which had previously been called Bien al Gasrine had kept its name for a very long time after the demolition of the palaces, but later changed to al Nahsin, the "street of boilermakers") where the western palace previously stood, was rebuilt by constructions commissioned by Qalāwūn: this included the Naṣir Qalāwūn Mausoleum (1295–1304), the madrasa and the maristan (which no longer exists) of Sultan Qalāwūn (1284–5), the mosque of Sultan Barque (1348–86) and the Kamliya madrasa (1225). Similarly, on the site of the eastern palace, various edifices were built such as the Bestak Palace (1334–39), Bayt al-Qadi (of which there only remains a maq'ad and today this looks onto a large square, which had originally been the courtyard of this enormous house), the Khan al Khalil, built at the end of the twelfth century under the reign of Sultan al Acharf Salah al-Dīn Khalil, and several other buildings. The Mamluks did not only build on the sites of the two palaces, but erected edifices and buildings throughout the town. Commerce gained great importance and a large number of wekālas, caravanserais and khans were built. A large part of the trading was centred around the principal north-south axis of the town. A number of markets joined together to form an entity and gave their names to the street junctions, on which they stood. Similarly outside the town, in the south and the west around the two transversal axes, other markets came together. Finally, the port of Būlāq in the west, played a significant role in the construction boom that took place in that area. It was an equally important centre for trade, and grew rapidly to become one of the most important ports of the Ottoman era. If during the post-'Ayyūbbid era, the political power was transferred to the Citadel, in turn, it was now around the Qasaba, or the principal axis inside the Fātimid town that all the economic and cultural activities were concentrated. These activities took place around the theological university of al-Azhar, that was not far from the complex that Sultan Al Ghuri had built in 1509.

The sixteenth century: Ottoman Cairo

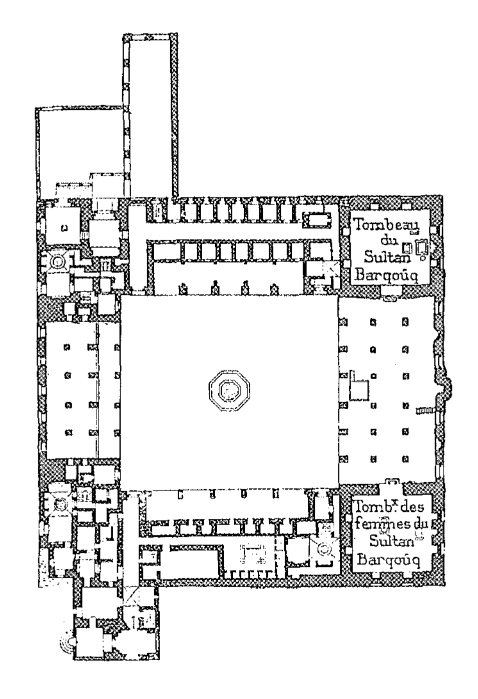
The appearance of Cairo did not change very much during the Ottoman era, which lasted from 1517 to 1798. The expansion that had started under the Mamluks continued and new districts that had started to be settled in the thirteenth century grew and their population rose. On the west, where the town had already reached the Khalij, the town spread even further towards the Nile. The port of Būlāq became even more important, and with the impetus from new merchandise and trading with Europe, the Ottomans used it as a transit port.

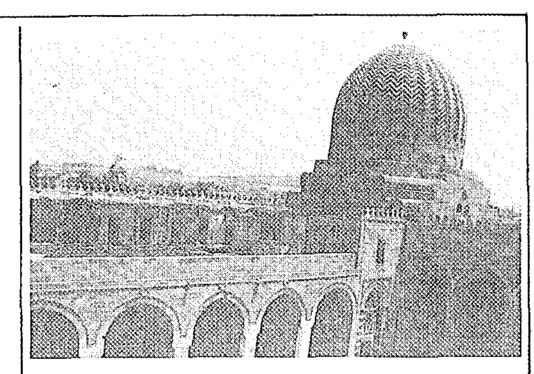
As a result of its location as a large commercial centre and the focus of economic activity, a number of wekālas, khans and caravanserais as well as a shipyard emerged and alongside it a number of related businesses blossomed. Construction work that had been started in this western section under the Mamluks and the existence of two axes leading to Būlāq, only speeded up the growth and the urbanisation of this region. Around the Birkah al Azbakiyya, a large number of big residential houses were put up and it became a leisure resort. The same applies for the Nasiriyya district, which was near Saiyda Zeinab and Birkat al-Fil. From the eighteenth century onwards, the construction boom gained further momentum around and beyond the Khalij.

The southern districts that had also expanded in the fourteenth century, spread along the two urban axes in the eighteenth century: the first, on the east, started from Bab Zuwaylah and rejoined the citadel by passing Al Darb Al Ahmar and Tabbana, and the second was the continuation of the principal axis of the town from Bab Zuwaylah to the old town of Ibn Tūlūn and ending up in Fustat. Inside the town itself, the Ottomans carried out some quite important works like the one attributed to Emir Radwan Bey (1736), which stood to the south of Bab Zuwiyal and ran along the principal axis, called, at this section, "Qasabt Radwan". This urban complex, a large part of which still exists today, comprised of a palace, rab's (on both sides of the street), a wekāla and an indoor market.

The urban development of the district went hand in hand with a surge in economic activities, which can be seen by the emergence of a large number of commercial buildings.

Within the town, around the main axis, trading increased and hence the number of wekālas, khans and caravanserais did also, to the extent, that the rich traders and emirs were forced to flee the town to settle in more spacious districts on the west, where they were able to build large residential homes and gardens. On the outside, new market places sprung up in the residential quarters and the two axes linking the town to Būlāq developed into important commercial poles.





The cemeteries

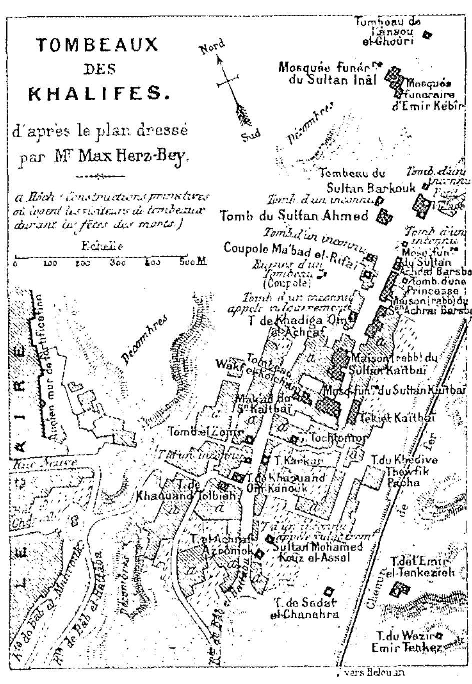
The cemeteries of 'The cities of the dead' — now changed to 'The cities of the dead and the living' (as some people now live there — which is a controversial matter in Cairo, as elsewhere), presented, for a very long time, an interesting aspect from an architectural and urbanistic point of view. Two of them were particularly important as they contained a large number of historical monuments: the Qaitbay cemetery on the east, and the Immam al Chafei in the south of the ancient Fātimid city. They occupied a sandy, desert area, at the foot of the Muqattam heights, outside the walls of the old town. Today a modern artery that runs parallel to the aqueduct separates the cemeteries from the wall.

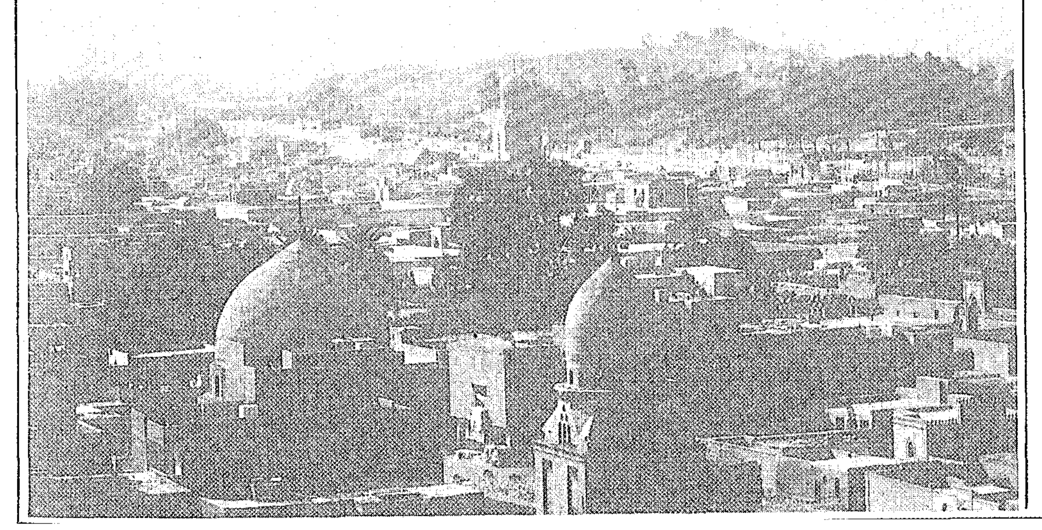
The cemeteries are today real cities laid out in a grid formation. The tombs lie at ground level of the mausolea, whose forms lend themselves to habitation, and even to building upon them, so that simple transformation render them liveable. These 'homes of the dead' are called 'hoch' in Arabic, which can also mean court.

In the fourteenth century the Mamluks had started to build magnificent tombs, which from this period onwards no longer constituted a mere mausoleum but real architectural complexes. The Barqouq Khanga, for example, built for Nasr al Din Farg in the Qaitby cemetery between 1400-1411, was adorned with two mausoleums (one for his father and one for himself) and a sabīl Kuttab.

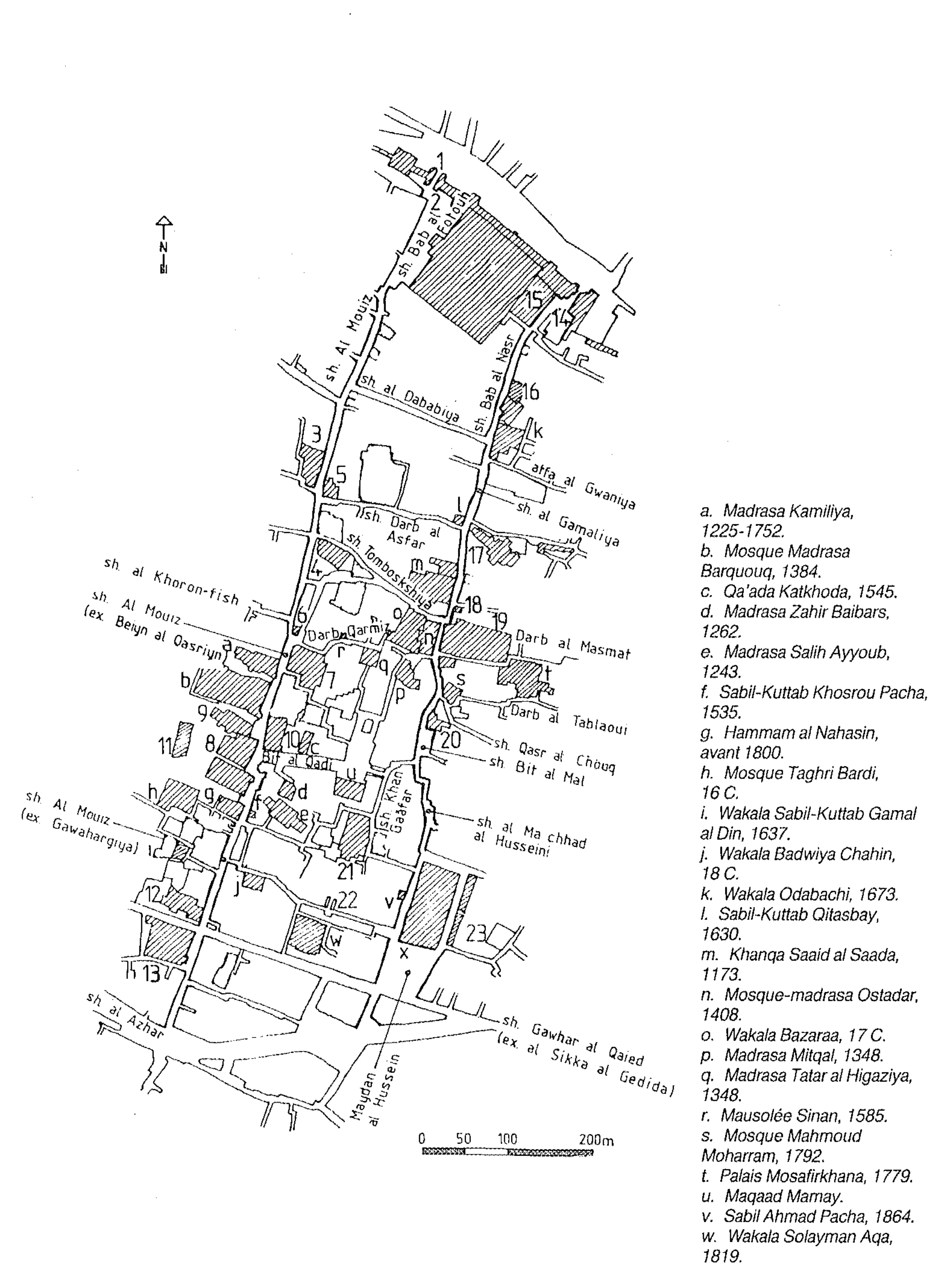
The town of Qaitby, which had lent its name to the cemetery, was built in 1472 and was also a good example of a true urban complex. It contained a mausoleum with a sabīl-kuttab, a rab' (collective houses and shops), a maq'ad (reception hall) and a drinking-trough, and was all enclosed by a wall, of which the portals still exist.

These two types of constructions, with the school and the fountain on the one hand, and the theological school and the houses on the other, show that the tradition of living in a cemetery probably goes back a very long way, but it was certainly within a different context.

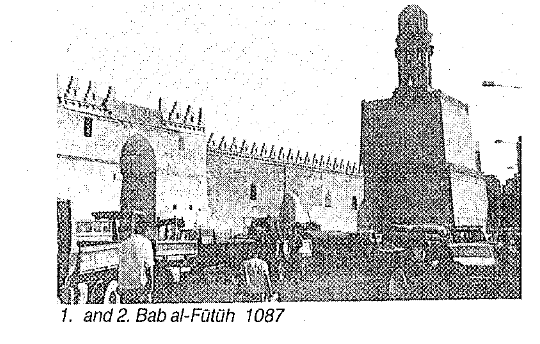




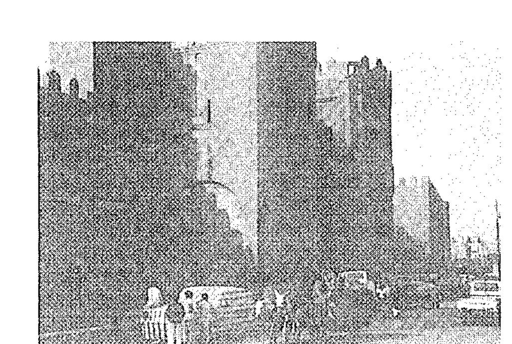
Al-Mouiz-Gamaliya



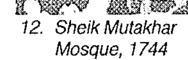
a. Madrasa Kamiliya, 1225-1752.
b. Mosque Madrasa Barquouq, 1384.
c. Qa'ada Katkhoda, 1545.
d. Madrasa Zahir Baibars, 1262.
e. Madrasa Salih Ayyoub, 1243.
f. Sabil-Kuttab Khosrou Pacha, 1535.
g. Hammam al Nahasin, avant 1800.
h. Mosque Taghri Bardi, 16 C.
i. Wakala Sabil-Kuttab Gamal al Din, 1637.
j. Wakala Badwiya Chahin, 18 C.
k. Wakala Odabachi, 1673.
l. Sabil-Kuttab Qitasbay, 1630.
m. Khanqa Saaid al Saada, 1173.
n. Mosque-madrasa Ostadar, 1408.
o. Wakala Bazaraa, 17 C.
p. Madrasa Mitqal, 1348.
q. Madrasa Tatar al Higaziya, 1348.
r. Mausolée Sinan, 1585.
s. Mosque Mahmoud Moharram, 1792.
t. Palais Mosafirkhana, 1779.
u. Maqaad Mamay.
v. Sabil Ahmad Pacha, 1864.
w. Wakala Solayman Aqa, 1819.



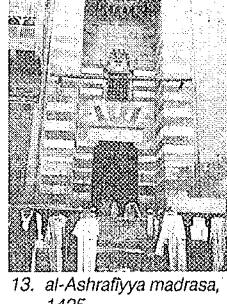
1. and 2. Bab al-Fūtūh 1087





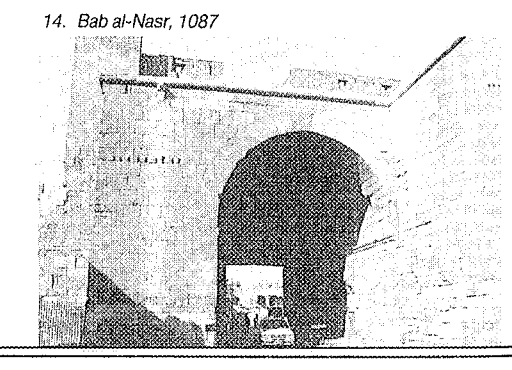


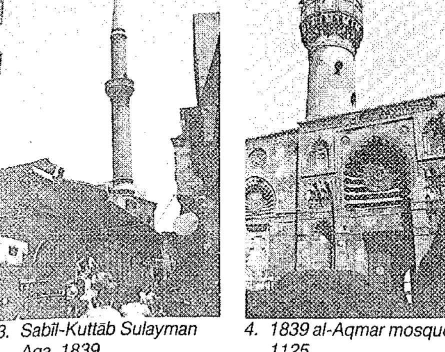
12. Sheik Mutakhar Mosque, 1744

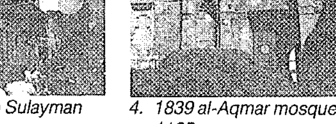


13. al-Ashrafiyya madrasa, 1425

14. Bab al-Nasr, 1087

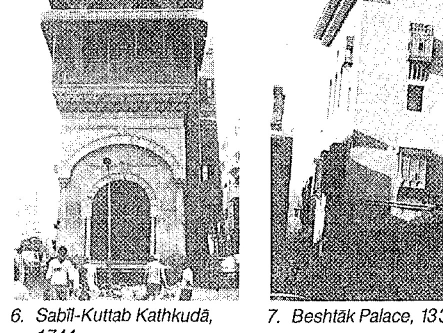






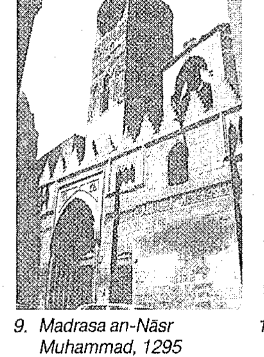
3. Sabīl-Kuttāb Sulayman Aga, 1839

4. 1839 al-Aqmar mosque, 1125



6. Sabīl-Kuttab Kathkudā, 1744

7. Beshtāk Palace, 1334



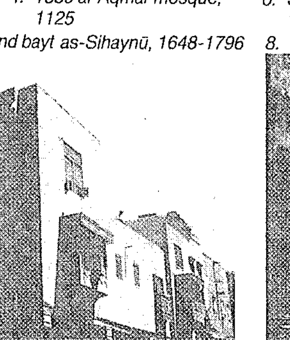
9. Madrasa an-Nāsr Muhammad, 1295

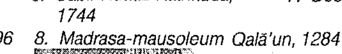
10. Sabīl-Kuttab Muhammad Ali, 1828

5. Bayt Mustafā Ga'far, 1713 and bayt as-Sihaynū, 1648-1796

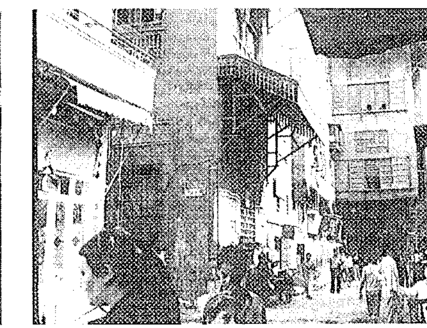
8. Madrasa-mausoleum Qalā'un, 1284

11. New hospital in Qalā'un, 1915

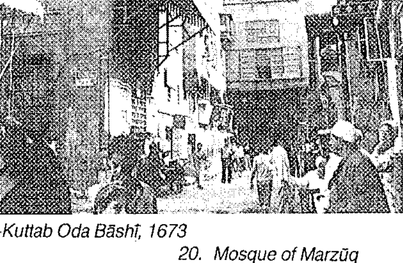


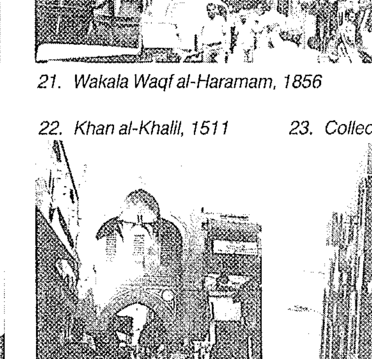












15. Wakala Qāytbay, 1481 and al-Hakīm Mosque, 990

18. Sabīl-Kuttab Oda Bāshī, 1673

21. Wakala Waqf al-Haramam, 1856

16. Masjid al-Shohada, 19th c.

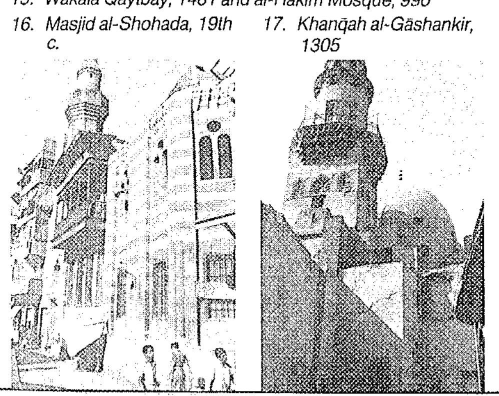
17. Khanqāh al-Gāshankir, 1305

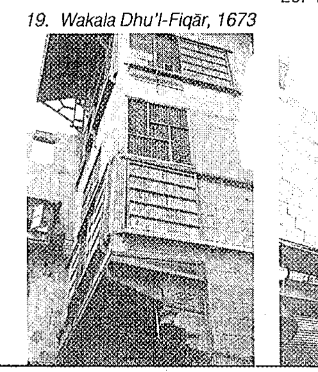
19. Wakala Dhu'l-Fiqār, 1673

20. Mosque of Marzūq al-Ahmadī, 17th c.

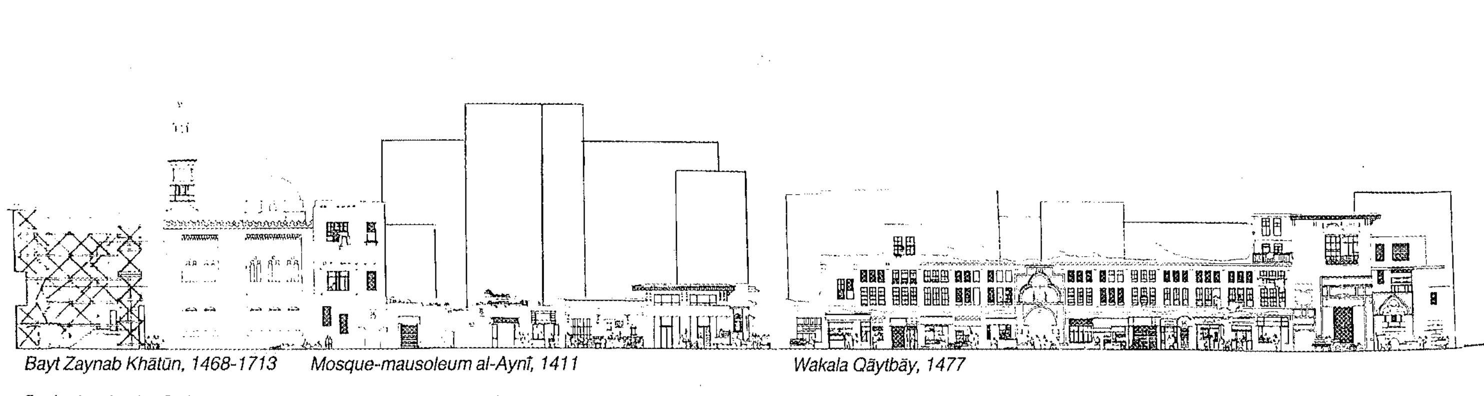
22. Khan al-Khalīl, 1511

23. Collective housing 1950



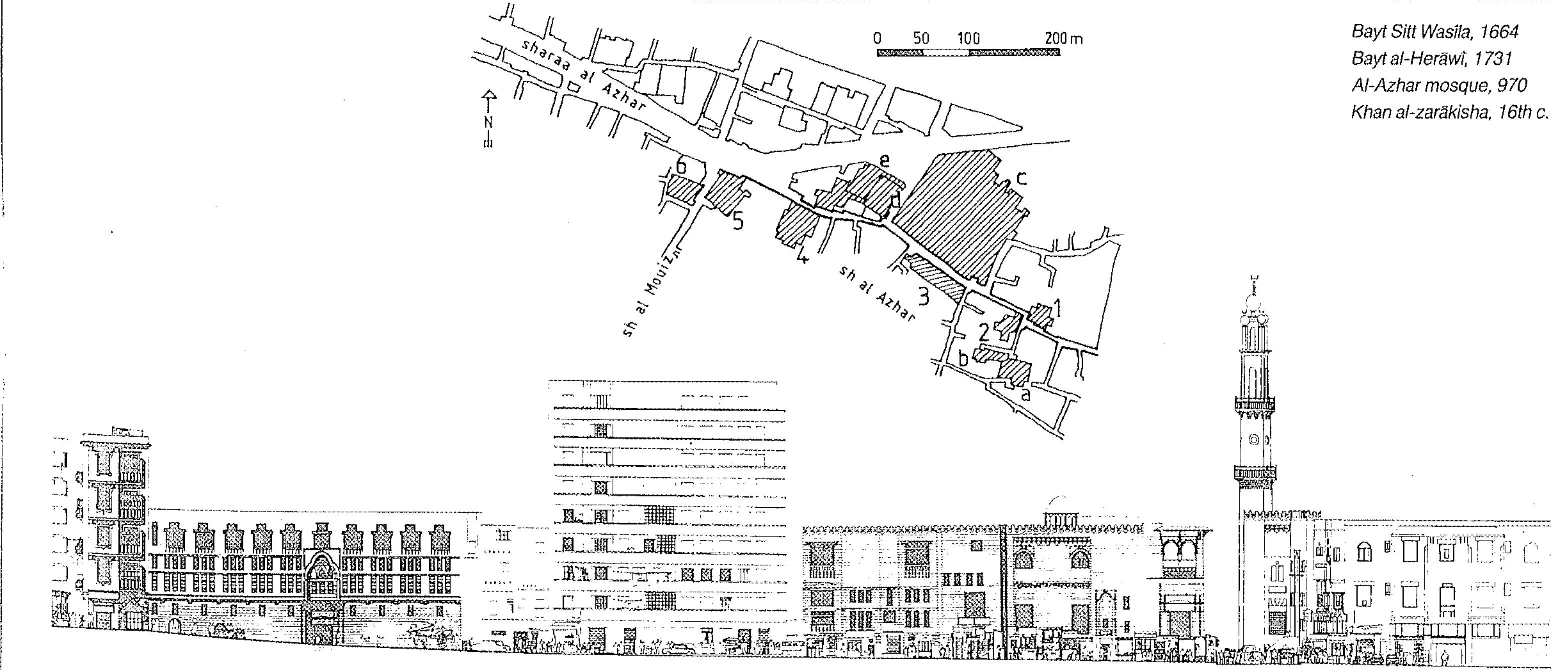


Al-Azhar



Bayt Zaynab Khātūn, 1468-1713 Mosque-mausoleum al-Aynī, 1411 Wakala Qāytbāy, 1477

Scale drawing by C. Jouenne and P. Drotcharen, diploma project "Urban rehabilitation in Cairo", 1984



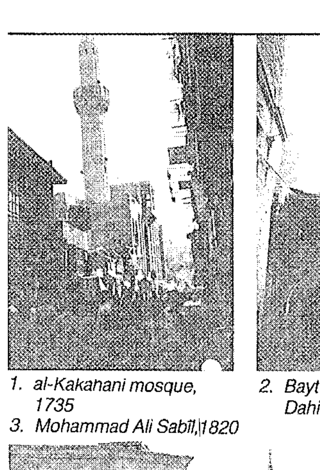
Bayt Sitt Wasīla, 1664
Bayt al-Herāwī, 1731
Al-Azhar mosque, 970
Khan al-zarākisha, 16th c.

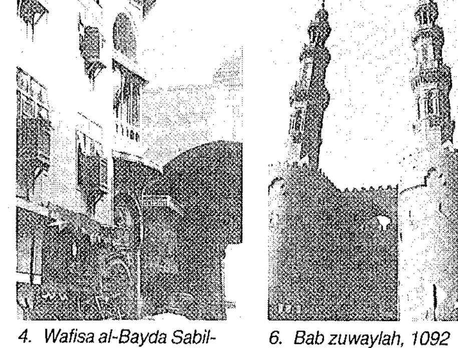
Madrasa al-Ghūrī, 1504

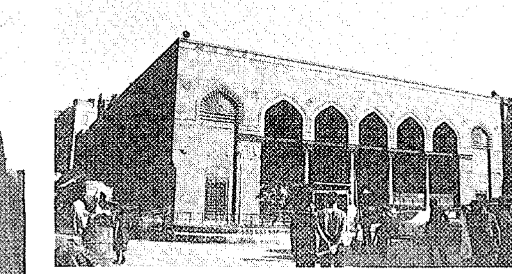
Wakala al-Ghūrī, 1504

CAIRO
the centre: ancient and modern

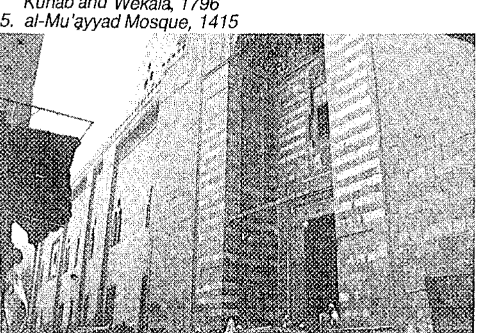


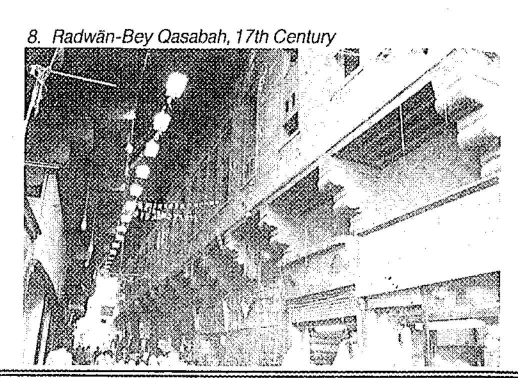






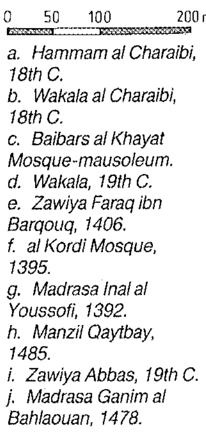
1. al-Kakahani mosque, 1735
2. Bayt Gamal al Dīn al Dahibi, 1637
3. Mohammad Ali Sabīl, 1820
4. Wafisa al-Bayda Sabīl-Kuhāb and Wekāla, 1796
5. al-Mu'ayyad Mosque, 1415
6. Bab zuwaylah, 1092
7. as-Salih Talā' Mosque, 1160
8. Radwān-Bey Qasabah, 17th Century



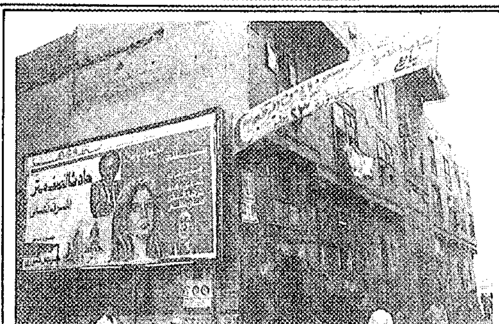


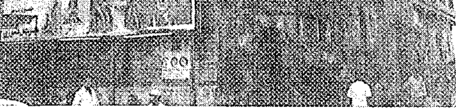
9. Radwān-Bey Palace, 1650
10. Katkhudā Zāwiya, 1729 and Gani Beh Mosque, 1426
11. Takūyat as-Sulahmaniya, 1543

Al-Mouiz
Secteur sud

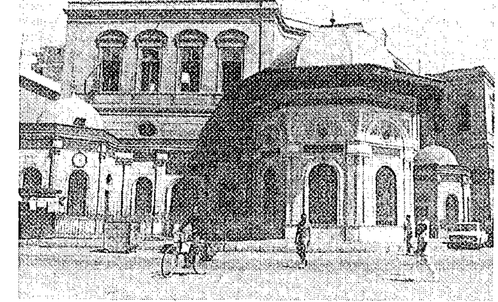


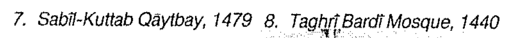
a. Hammam al Charaibi, 18th C.
b. Wakala al Charaibi, 18th C.
c. Baibars al Khayat Mosque-mausoleum.
d. Wakala, 19th C.
e. Zawiya Faraq ibn Barqouq, 1406.
f. al Kordi Mosque, 1395.
g. Madrasa Inal al Youssofi, 1392.
h. Manzil Qaytbay, 1485.
i. Zawiya Abbas, 19th C.
j. Madrasa Ganim al Bahlaouan, 1478.





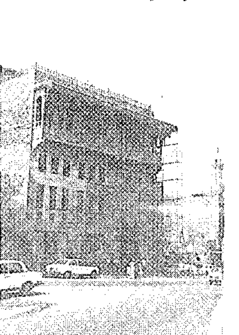
1. Rab' and Sabīl-Kuttab al-Qizlār, 1618



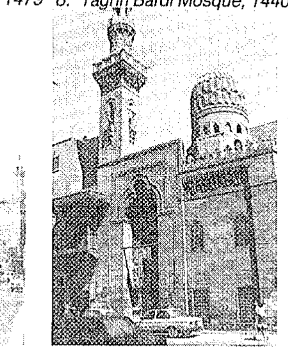


5. Sabil Omm Abbās, 19th C.

3. Zawiya al-Abbār, 1284



7. Sabīl-Kuttab Qāytbay, 1479

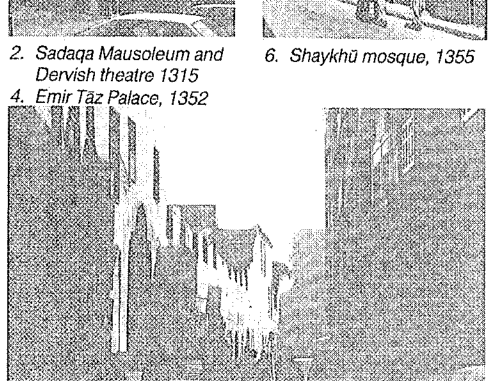


8. Taghrī Bardī Mosque, 1440

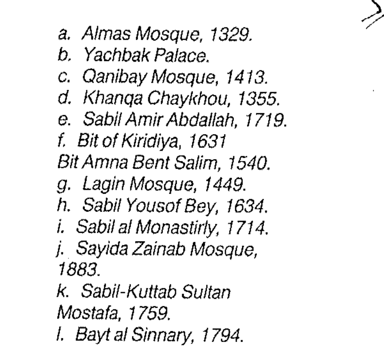


2. Sadaqa Mausoleum and Dervish theatre 1315

6. Shaykhū mosque, 1355



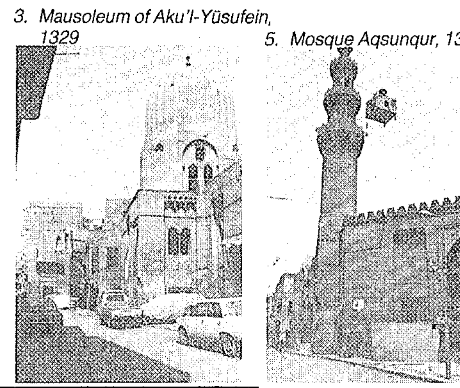
4. Emir Tāz Palace, 1352

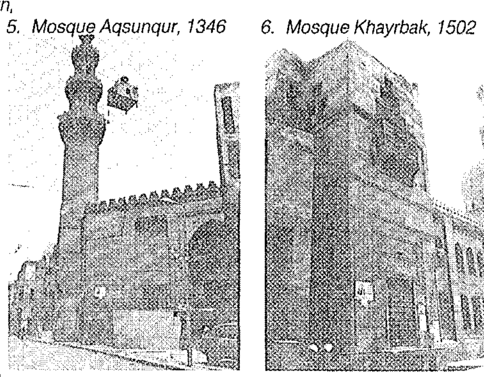


a. Almas Mosque, 1329.
b. Yachbak Palace.
c. Qanibay Mosque, 1413.
d. Khanqa Chaykhou, 1355.
e. Sabil Amir Abdallah, 1719.
f. Bit of Kiridiya, 1631 Bit Amna Bent Salim, 1540.
g. Lagin Mosque, 1449.
h. Sabil Yousof Bey, 1634.
i. Sabil al Monastirly, 1714.
j. Sayida Zainab Mosque, 1883.
k. Sabil-Kuttab Sultan Mostafa, 1759.
l. Bayt al Sinnary, 1794.

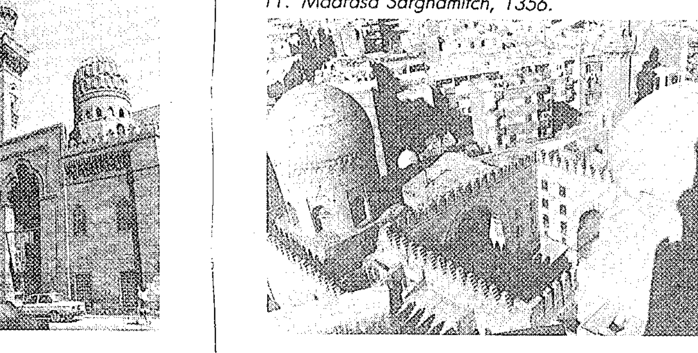


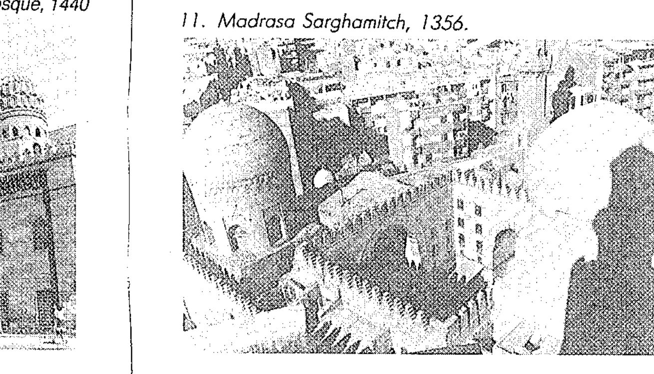
1. Mosque al-Mihmandār, 1324
4. Rab'al Tābbāna, 1652





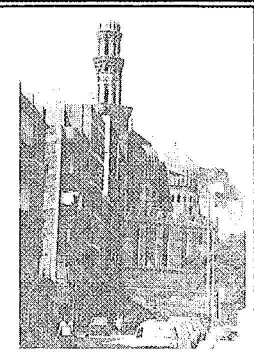
2. Mosque al-Māridānī, 1339
3. Mausoleum of Aku'l-Yūsufein, 1329
5. Mosque Aqsunqur, 1346
6. Mosque Khayrbak, 1502





10. Ibn Tūlūn mosque, 876

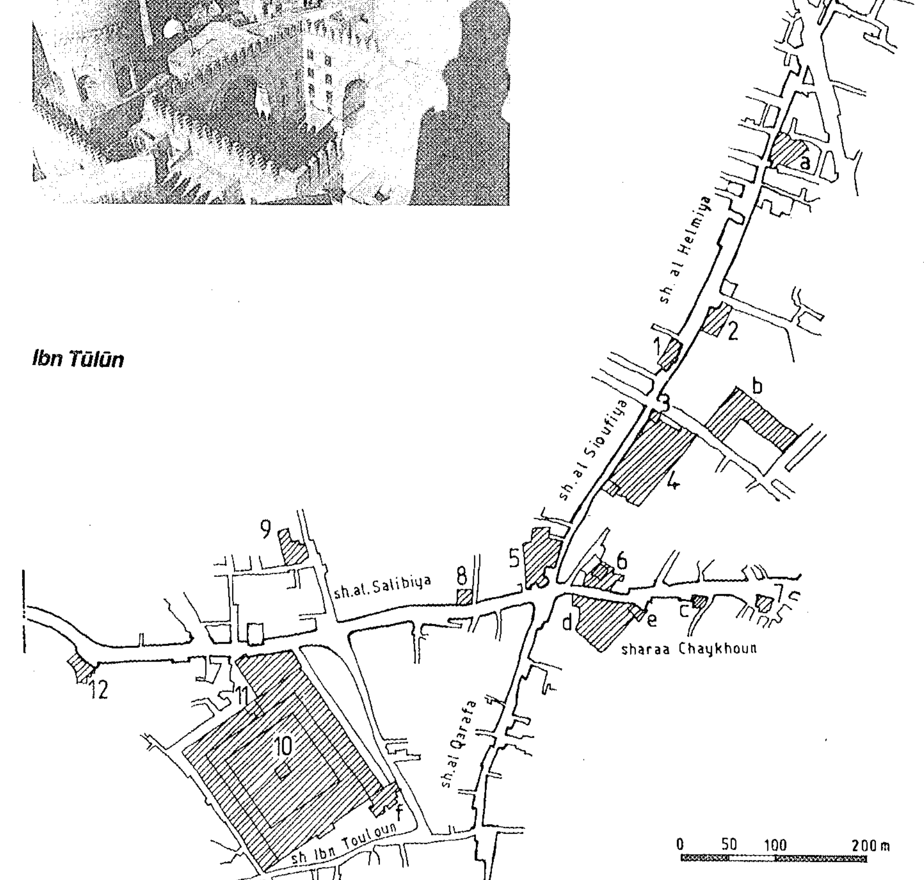
9. Madrasa, Sabīl-Kuttab Emir Azbak, 1494



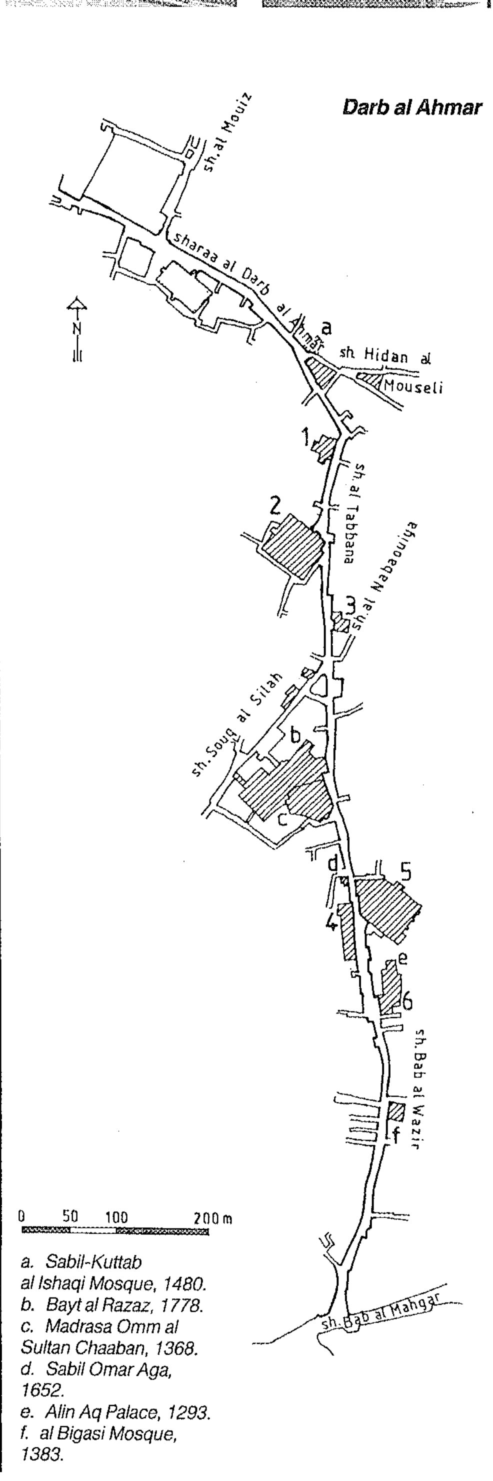
12. Mosque-mausoleum Songor al Gawli, 1303.

11. Madrasa Sarghamitch, 1356.

Ibn Tūlūn



Darb al Ahmar



a. Sabil-Kuttab al Ishaqi Mosque, 1480.
b. Bayt al Razaz, 1778.
c. Madrasa Omm al Sultan Chaaban, 1368.
d. Sabil Omar Aga, 1652.
e. Alin Aq Palace, 1293.
f. al Bigasi Mosque, 1383.

Cairo in the 1800's

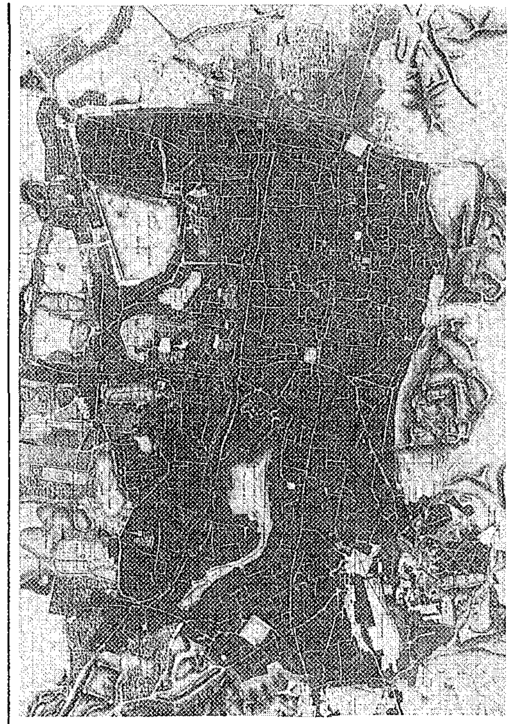
At the start of the nineteenth century, just before the arrival of Mohammad Ali, the town had still retained its medieval features. It measured 793 hectares in area and even 883 hectares if you included its two ports, Būlaq, in the north and Hisr (in ancient Cairo) in the south. It had 263,700 inhabitants. The town itself — that is from north-east to north-west — was 2400 metres wide with a circumference of 240,000 metres. A major axis running from north to south divided the town in two portions, and measured 4600 metres. From Bab Al Hussayniya in the north to Sayida Zainab in the south, seventy one gates protected the town. There were a number of inner gates. Amongst the exterior gates, twelve were important: four in the south, two in the east, four in the north and two in the west (today there are only two gates in the north, Bab al-Fūtūh and Bab al-Nasr and one inner gate, Bal Zuwaylah). Although the gates no longer exist, some of the districts have still kept their names (Bab al-Hadid, Bab al-Luq, Bab al Wazir...)

There were twelve lakes on the outskirts of the town, of which the two largest were the Al Azbakiya lake and the Al Fil.

Cairo was divided into 53 boroughs (hārah), linked by eight major roads: three longitudinals (the most important one being the main north-south axis), and five transversals, three of which ran from the Nile to the citadel. The town was surrounded by gardens, orchards and two large cemeteries, which stretched over an area, half the size of the town itself.

Two canals flowed on the west, one bordering the town and called Khalij Mouiminin and the second was situated between the first and the Nile.

Some parts of the surrounding wall of the town, as it stood in the twelfth century (under Salah al-Dīn), was engulfed by the north and westward expansion of the town, whereas the eastern and southern boundaries remained intact. This ancient wall, that is no longer in its complete form, was made up of a large wall fortified by round- and square-shaped towers and equipped with gates, many of which had watch-towers and turrets. Inside the town, different ethnic communities were grouped together in districts, each containing their own place of worship, like the Coptic quarters, Hārat al Nasara, in the south of Azbakīyah square, the Greek quarters, Hārat al Roum, in the east of Sakhariya, the Jewish quarters, Hārat al Yahoud, between the Qatāwūn maristan and al-Mūski, where there were ten synagogues (all located in very narrow streets), and finally Hārat al Afrang, on the west of the canal next to al-Mūski, where the Catholic churches were situated.



• *Plan of the Description of Egypt, 1801*

Transformation of the town

In 1863, Khedive Ismail's rise to power marked a decisive stage in the evolution of Cairo. The town was essentially confined to the area shown on the 'Plan de la Description de l'Egypte', drawn up in 1800. Naturally certain changes were instituted under the reign of Mohammad Ali and his successors. These were the most important ones:

- The drainage of some of the marshlands to make room for palaces (for example, al Helmiya), or to turn the marshlands into plantations (like those belonging to Ibrahim Pasha, in the west of the town).
- The refurbishment of the Shubra estate (in the north of Cairo) to accommodate the Pasha, and of the Nile banks to house the royal family.
- A policy to maintain the proper conditions of the streets, which was never very strongly enforced.
- The construction of a road, cutting through the old town (the rue Mousky).
- And finally the setting-up of Ornato, the organisation responsible for improving the appearances of Cairo and Alexandria.

These show that the main concern was not so much simply to build as to actually renovate the town. It was after 1867–68 that the transformations gained momentum. Under the reign of Ismail, the built-up surface of the town increased from 863 hectares to 1,218 hectares (an increase of about 50%). Later this built-up area was to become 1,630 hectares in 1897 and 3,177 hectares in 1911, and during that same year, the town was to stretch to its suburbs and outlying districts, which all together covered an area of 16,000 hectares. During this same period, its population rose from 350,000 in 1873 to 365,187 in 1897 and 790,000 in 1917. The town's population surpassed one million in 1927.

The transformation of Cairo occurred during four distinct periods:

- The 1870's: the 'new town' was created;
- between 1880–1900: the town was wholly reorganised;
- between 1900–1925: large public works were carried out;
- between 1925–1950: town-planning and reconstruction.

The new city/the green city, 1870

In 1867, the Khedive came to Paris for the Universal Exhibition. There he marvelled at the achievements of Baron Haussman and no doubt conceived a similar project for Cairo. At his request, the Prefet de la Seine recommended men that were suitably qualified to carry out a similar project in Cairo. Thus the arrival of P. Grand in 1868, who headed the Voirie (department of roads) for 30 years, and G. Delchevalrie, who was put in charge of landscaping the town between 1969 and 1878.

After a short while, a new district came into being, called Ismailiya. It was situated on the site of Ibrahim Pasha's plantation, bordered the town and was built partially according to the former lay-out. This district (presently the city centre) was made up of large plots of land and wide boulevards, linked by roundabouts, and stood in great contrast to the old parts of the town.

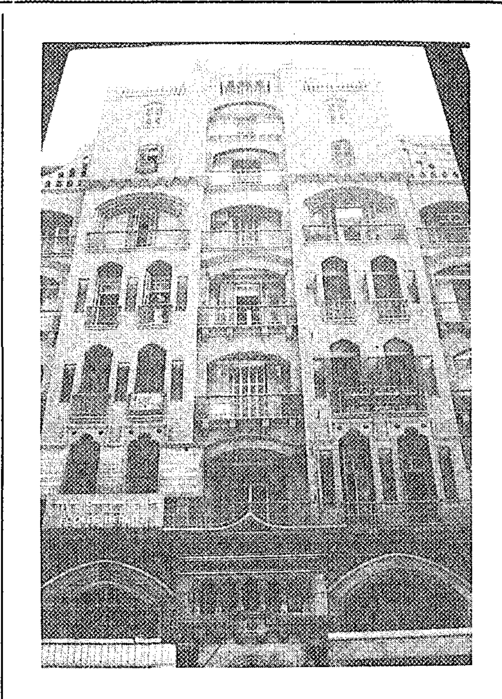
The contracts signed with La Compagnie des Eaux in 1865 and La Société Lebon in 1869 ensured the provision of water and gas to the future housing estates. Here and there, steps had been taken for an eventual sewer system. A programme to set up gardens and small parks started up almost simultaneously. Apart from the remodelling of Azbakīyah gardens and the creation of some small gardens, the Khedive commissioned large public parks for the west of the town, the isle of al-Jazīrah and the left bank of the Nile. This new green belt covered a space of 185 hectares.

This period also witnessed the start of Fajjālah in the north and Baghala in the south. All these new districts were connected with the old town with the following four principal meeting points from the north to the south: Bab al Hadid square, the Azbakīyah, Abdine square and Sayida Zainab square.

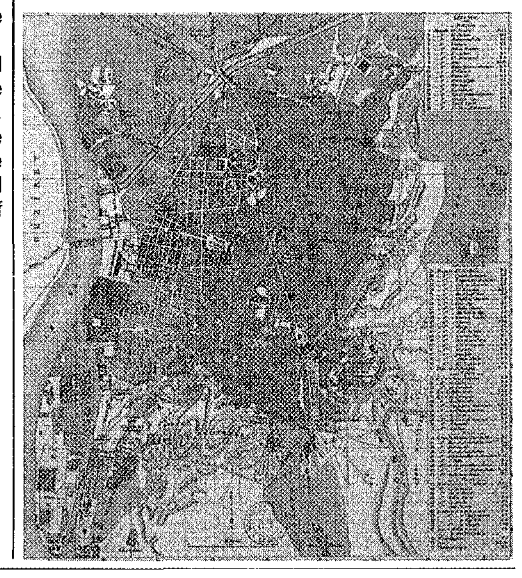
These landmarks came under the close scrutiny of architects and many detailed studies of the squares and their surrounding buildings were made. This included the railway station at Bab al Hadid, the Opera House at Azbakīyah, the government palace at Abdine and the mosque at Sayida Zainab. And lastly, there were the roads that further connected the old town to the new town. These were: the boulevard Mohammad Ali that ran from the opera house to the Citadel, the rue Clot-Bey between the opera house and the station, the boulevard Abdine from the palace to the opera house and boulevard Abd al Aziz from the palace to the entrance of al-Mūski.

Reorganisation between 1880–1900

The great urban upheavals were succeeded by a period, during which a rather sluggish administrative machinery was installed. In 1878 the French and the British, who controlled Egypt's finances, called for an administrative reorganisation, which was to affect the Tanzim (the department of roads, an organisation created in 1864 which was part of the Ministry for Social Services). The first new regulation came into effect in 1882, under which the Tanzim's func-



• *Plan of Cairo, end of 19th century*



tions were outlined. These were more accurately defined and broadened by the new laws laid out in 1889. These laws covered regulations concerning the width of the streets, their lay-out and the strict control of projecting facades. In addition to the Tanzim, general social services department was created, for the town of Cairo, the duties of which included the cleanliness and upkeep of the streets, a service for granting building permissions, the building of roads, the plantation of trees and public lighting.

Moreover, there was a body of rules and regulations concerning the preservation of Arab monuments, expropriations, the tax imposed on built-up property, and finally public hygiene.

From a morphological point of view, from this period onwards, the urban lay-out of Cairo did not undergo any spectacular alterations; instead, the town continued to swell along the lines set in the Ismāīl era. The legislative apparatus was able to make interventions and thus continue to carry out works of preservation in the city. The work began from inside the town: the roads were widened following a precise hierarchical grid, cul-de-sacs were unblocked, to open up the old districts, and the entrances to the mosques were cleared up.

The town-planners presented projects for building housing estates on the open land that belonged to the government, such as the Qasr al Douraba or Būlāq. The general lay-out of Tawfikiya quarter was completed. An important achievement was that of draining the Khalij — a decision that was taken in 1897 after negotiations with the new Tramway Company. This company was then put in charge of part of the works.

The grand projects, 1900–1925

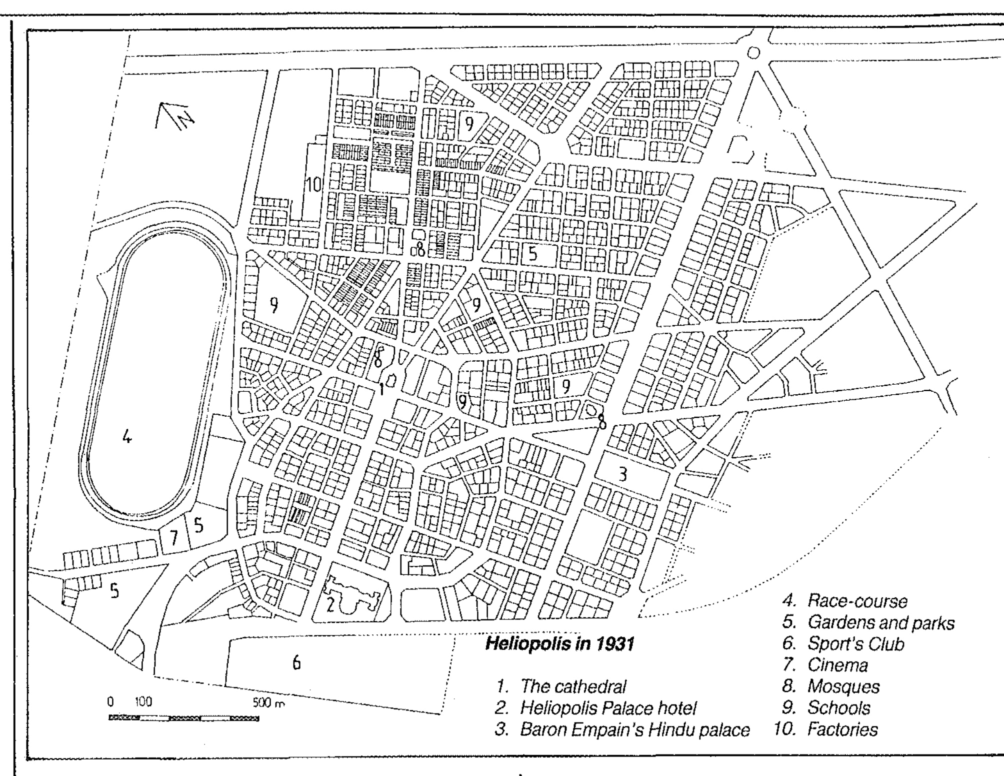
With the turn of the century, urban policies took a new orientation. From then onwards, the emphasis was put on improving sanitation and the upkeep of the town, while expansion of the town was left to individual initiative. Meanwhile the policy to 'open up' the town continued, and two new roads were built in 1923: the rue al-Azkar (20 metres wide), which was put in addition to the rue al-Mūski, for it had already become too narrow, and the rue Amir Farouk (30 metres wide) provided quick access to Abbāssīyah.

The construction of new bridges across the Nile and the improvements in the means of transport plus the creation of the Tramway Company in 1895, were a considerable boost to the development of housing in the suburbs and the outlying districts.

This company was indeed responsible for the emergence of Heliopolis in 1906 — Heliopolis was a true model town in the heart of the desert some ten kilometres outside Cairo. Similarly, the districts of Shubra and Rawd al-Faraj owed their expansion to the new tramway lines opened up in 1902 and 1905. The same went for Zamalīk and numerous districts in the north-east of the town such as Sakākīni, Ghamrah and Qobba Gardens.

All these were the work of private entrepreneurs. The important influx of foreign capital and the emergence of mortgage loans gave birth to a number of real estate agencies. Land speculation gained importance. A multitude of juxtaposed housing estates of variable sizes sprung up and formed the outer limits of the town.

With the exception of Heliopolis, little care was given on the whole to planning and organisation of urban life in most areas. Heliopolis presented, in fact, an exemplary and unique model of a well laid-out and organised town, and no doubt it owed this to the personality of its promoter, the Baron Empain. In all aspects it stood out amongst all similar projects of the day: its planning, based on the model of garden cities, its highly discernible central point (around the cathedral), its infrastructure and facilities (sport, schools, hotels), its green spaces, its separate residential zones, and finally its very clear regulations on town-planning, which were strictly enforced during its construction, without forgetting the installation of industries, that provided its inhabitants with work on the spot. All these contributed to making Heliopolis into a coherently structured town and were lacking in any other town.



Heliopolis in 1931

1. *The cathedral*
2. *Heliopolis Palace hotel*
3. *Baron Empain's Hindu palace*
4. *Race-course*
5. *Gardens and parks*
6. *Sport's Club*
7. *Cinema*
8. *Mosques*
9. *Schools*
10. *Factories*

Shubra, for example, developed around a fairly loose row of drained up canals and paved country roads. There were a collection of uniformly-sized plots and a selection of highly divided patches of land, each lined with narrow streets (which, as private paths, did not come under the jurisdiction of the Tanzim). This caused the area to become densely populated.

Garden City and Rawdah were not divided up into allotments so quickly, although the plans were drawn up around 1910.

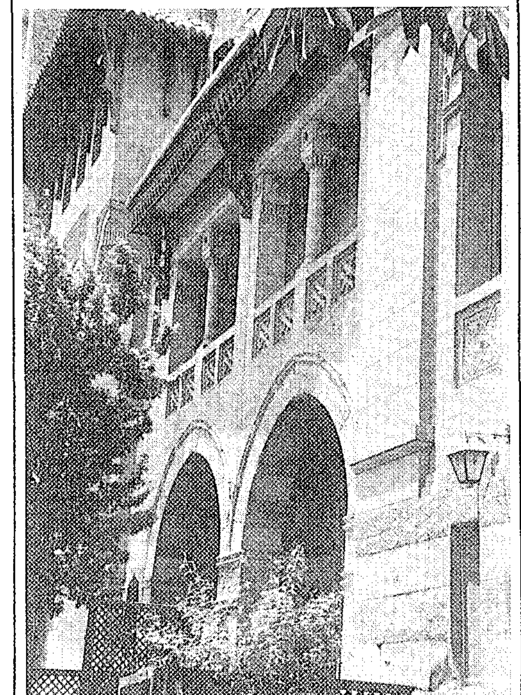
Similarly, plans were drawn up for the north of Jīzah on the west bank. Finally in the south, two new poles of urbanisation developed. These were the residential areas of Ma'ādi and Helouan. In the case of Helouan, the project had originally been drawn up during the reign of Ismaīl, but was partially abandoned. This was later taken up and realised by a group of capitalists.

Urban planning and reconstruction 1925–1950

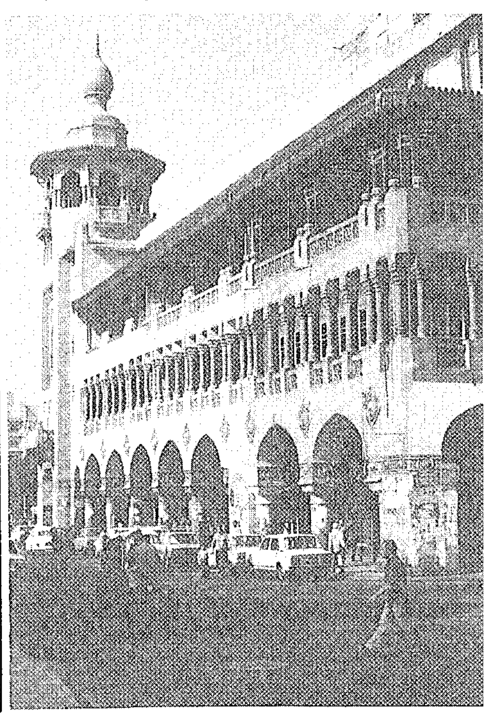
The town of Cairo continued to expand and became more and more difficult to control and manage. The services of the town were reorganised and the 'Town-Planning Office', which was responsible for new projects, and 'The House Inspection Office', which drew up a list of houses that needed repair or had to be demolished, were created. Nevertheless, the highly complex organisation of the town stood in the way of rationalisation and control. By 1929, Cairo had no municipalities and the services of the town depended on five governmental departments, each functioning autonomously. These were the departments of the Tanzim, the metropolitan police, the department of public health, sewers and public buildings. A high commission created in 1929 was put in charge of coordinating the different departments. The system had become so inert and sluggish that the setting up of a global project for the town was deferred. Cairo was not to enjoy a municipality until 1949.

'The House Inspection Office' was, however, more active. About 1,000 orders for demolition were annually drawn up. Although these were not all put into action; nevertheless, this policy played an important part in changing the town's appearance and was what lay behind the important reconstruction boom that took place in the old districts of the town.

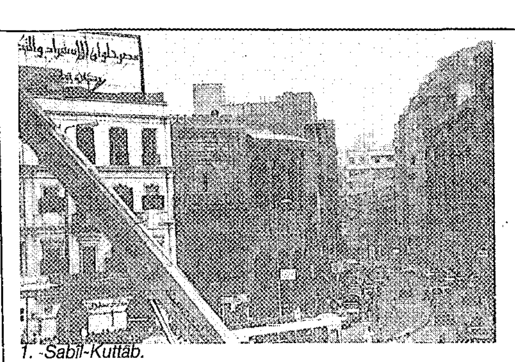
Heliopolis, villa



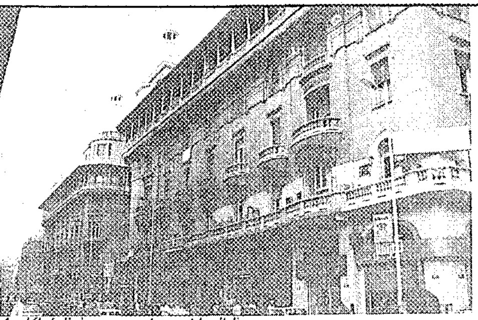
Heliopolis, buildings with arcades



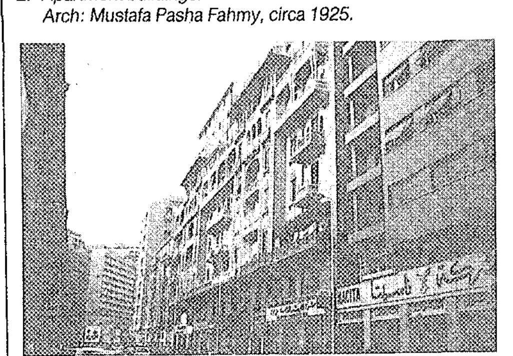
Centre-ville



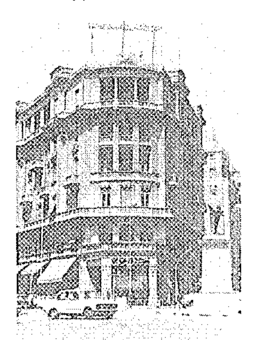
1. Sabil-Kuttāb.
Arch: Pantanelli, circa 1880.
2. Apartment buildings.
Arch: Mustafa Pasha Fahmy, circa 1925.

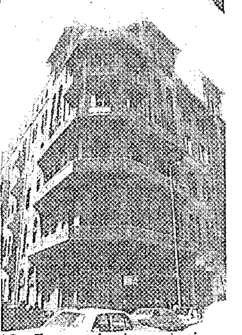


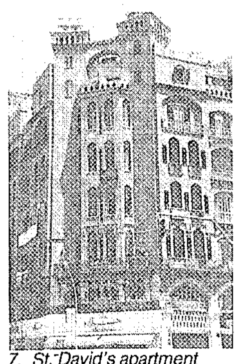
4. Khédiviaux apartment buildings.
Arch: A. Lasciac, 1911.
3. Former 'Club des Princes'.
Arch: A. Lasciac, 1898.
18. Groppi tea-rooms, 1925.







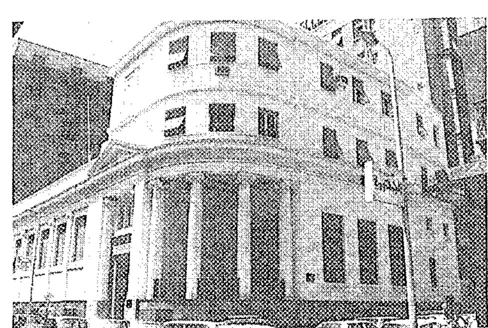


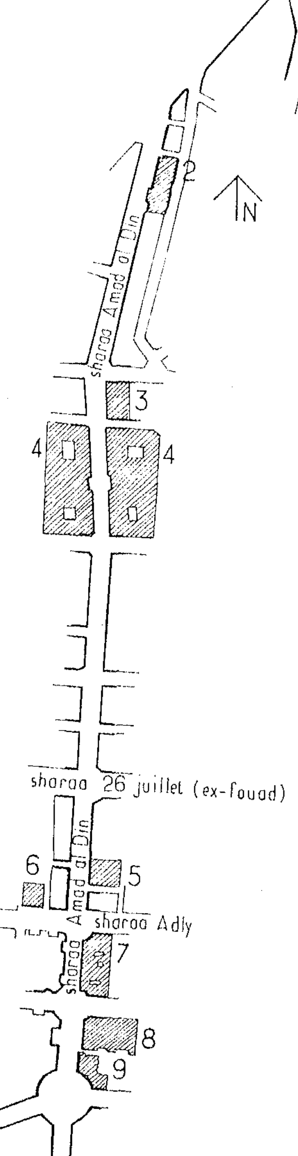


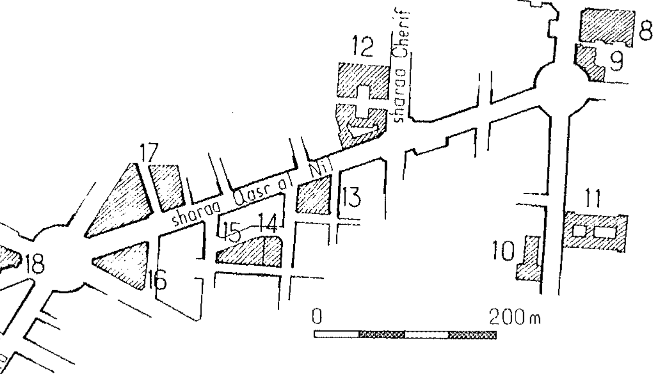
6. Synagogue.
Arch: E. Matasek, 1905
14. Cairo stock-exchange, circa 1910.

13. Former Assicurazioni apartment buildings.
Arch: A. Lasciac, 1910.

7. St. David's apartment buildings. Arch: R. Williams, 1911.

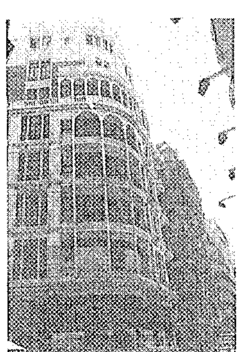




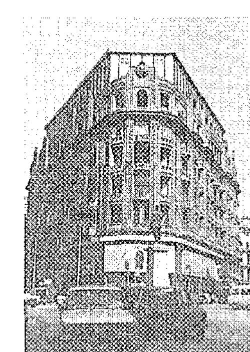




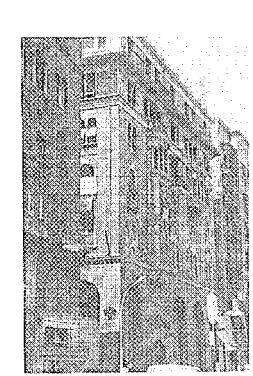
8. Credit Foncier, circa 1880.
9. Former Club Risotto.
Arch: A. Lasciac, 1897.
10. St. Joseph's Church.
Arch: Aristide Leonori, 1904.
11. Misr Bank.
Arch: A. Lasciac, 1927.
12. Immobilia apartment buildings.
Arch: Max Edrei and G. Rossi, 1938.
19. Formerly Club Mohammad Aly.
Arch: A. Marcel, circa 1910.
20. Formerly Khayry-Bey palace, presently American University in Cairo, circa 1870, restored in 1907.
21. New wing of the American University in Cairo, 1932.
22. French lycée.
Arch: Erlanger, 1934.



15. Cosmopolitan Hotel, circa 1920.



16. Sednaoui apartment buildings. Arch: Mazza, 1925.



5. Gattegno (Department) stores. Formerly 'Bon Marché', circa 1910.

Greater Cairo, 1960–1984

The image of present day Cairo can be depicted thus: a population of 12 million, three local governments (Cairo, Jīzah, and Qalyūbīyah), 28 districts, the concentration of a ¼ of Egypt's population on a 50 km. stretch of land with an average density of 50,000/km^2 that could eventually rise to 250,000/km^2.

Starting in the 1960's (the Nasserite era), Cairo experienced another surge of urbanisation. After the 1952 revolution, the economic revival of the sixties brought about a rise in the population of the town; between 1950 to 1960, the population rose from 2.5 million to 3.9 million, to reach finally 6 million in 1972. With the rise in population, the town expanded; this expansion was mainly on the west bank of the Nile towards Jīzah (where the population rose from 215,111 in 1947 to 1.2 million in 1976), and also in the north beyond the railway tracks towards Shubra al-Kheya. This urbanisation had the following characteristics:

— the suburbs were linked by a network of highways
— the west bank of the Nile was developed
— low-cost housing projects were launched
— satellite towns emerged.

It was within this framework that many districts were joined up: Jīzah to Manial by the university bridge, Shubra al Kheyma to Helouan by an expressway 'La Corniche du Nil', the old Cairo to Maydān al Tahrir by widening the rue Qasr al Aini, and Heliopolis to the old Cairo by the route Salah Salim, which passed through the Citadel and ran along the aqueduct.

The construction of these communication axes resulted in the town's expansion towards the north, the west and the south.

In fact, the west bank developed very rapidly and certain districts such as Duggi, Ajūzah, Muhandisīn and al-Imbaba represent a perfect model of this period's urbanisation. The expressway connecting Shubra al Kheyma to Helouan and the resurgence of industry in these two parts caused expansion, and gave rise to settlements in the north and the south. In the north, Rawd al Faraj, al Sahel, and Shubra al Kheyma developed even more rapidly. In the north-east, the town expanded along two axes: along what used to be the canal under the Ismailiyas and the 'route de Suez'. Some villages such as Matariya, Zeitoun, Ain Shams and al-Marg were completely engulfed by the town. Heliopolis also lay along this principal boulevard.

The setting-up of low-cost housing added to the density of the population. Six- or seven-storey buildings sprung up along the main roads in relatively low-populated districts like al Wayli and al Zawiya al Hamra in the north, Imbaba on the left bank of the Nile, in the west the rubbish heaps of Tillal Zeinhem and Ain al Sira in the south and Darāsah in the east.

The two spectacular projects, the 'Madinet Nasr' and the 'Madinet al-Muqattam' were the hallmarks of Nasserite town-planning. The creation of 'Madinet Nasr' was considered a prestigious project on the part of the government, which wanted to turn it into an administrative centre. The city, located half-way between Heliopolis and the Citadel was divided into several sections: in the north-west, they roomed the administrative buildings and ministries, the stadium, the exhibition centre and the international trade fairs. In the north-east, there stood the olympic city, the university campus, the central buildings of the al Azhar university and an area for the future creation of an industrial centre and housing.

However, 'Madinet Nasr' changed bearings, and became a residential area with concrete buildings and wide boulevards.

The 'Madinet al-Muqattam' project, which was intended to encourage expansion towards the east, beyond Muqattam (an obstacle which was, in fact, never overcome) did not prove to be very successful and a large part of it remained unconstructed.

This was how the town took form in the 1960's: a constantly changing town, which expanded and stretched at a rapid pace, completely encompassing the hill-tops, which were no longer considered simple districts.

The al-Infita- policy (economic liberalisation) of the 60's, or the 'laissez faire' policy that encouraged speculation marked a new period — from a metropolis, the town grew to become a megalopolis. A very large construction boom on the west bank, in particular in the district of Mohandessin, meant a massive rise in population, and the town spilled over to the agricultural lands and went as far as small villages such as Mīt'Ugbah with its rural cottages. Furthermore, large buildings, and even skyscrapers replaced the villas and small houses of the 60's.

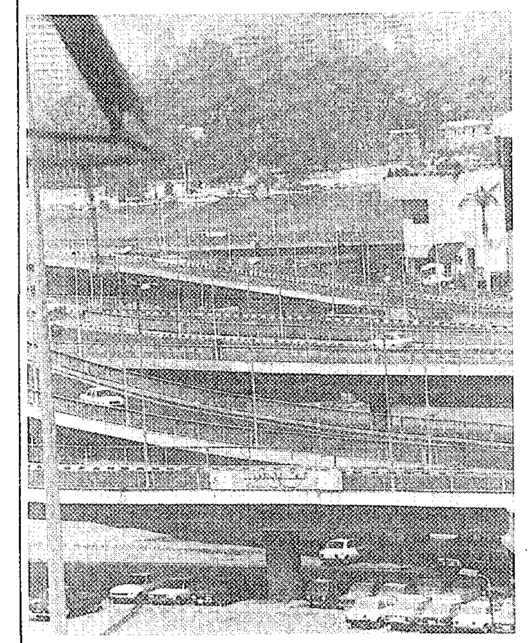
Similarly, *in the east, the town expanded beyond* the Muqattam for the first time. The Nasserite era witnessed a massive rise in population, and an extensive project for building 'transit towns' on the neighbouring hill was accomplished.

In the south, the Ma'adi district underwent a complete transformation (though the centre remained untouched), and today the area has stretched to the foot of the Muqattam heights and includes a spread of prefabricated houses. Inside the town itself to combat the problem of space, the population was housed in concrete high-rise blocks, that have now replaced the previous gardens that once decorated the banks of the Nile.

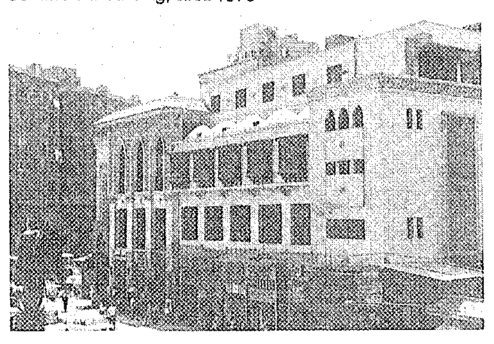
Faced with this unexpected growth, the expressways built in the 60's can no longer absorb the daily traffic, though their number has, in fact, doubled and there are now 'highroads' that cross the town and link up all the districts. These are: the road and the bridge of '6 Octobre' between Heliopolis and Jīzah, the bridge of Faisal at Jīzah, the al-Azhar bridge running parallel to the Salah Salim and continuing to the centre of the town. Highways were also built to link the east of Madinet Nasr to Jīzah passing the cemeteries and the isle of Dahab (south of Rawdah). The proposals for a metro are to eventually link up Helouan, Heliopolis and Jīzah to the centre. Cairo is presently a tremendous construction site, both within and on its outskirts. The latest proposal has been to force the town even further out by creating towns in the desert.

Since 1956, there has been a succession of three Master Plans. The first dates back to 1956–57, and it foresaw the construction of highways and satellite towns in the desert. This was followed by a second plan, drawn up between 1965 and 1970, and a third in 1980, that came under the title Long Range Urban Development Scheme. The latter suggested two ways of reorganising Greater Cairo. One was to build a ring road to limit the growth of the town, and to conserve the agricultural land. The second was to create three different kinds of new towns: a) in the desert some 50 to 100 kilometres from Cairo, b) satellite towns nearer the industrial and commercial centres, and c) twin-towns in the Nile valley, on the edge of the Delta. In all three, housing should be provided at a low cost, and they should contain an industrial infrastructure and communal facilities that would induce its inhabitants to stay. The towns should be situated in the north-east on the Ismailīyāh road, in the west on the desert road that leads to Alexandria, and in the south on the other side of Helouan. These projects are at the moment under way and some of the towns are partially inhabited.





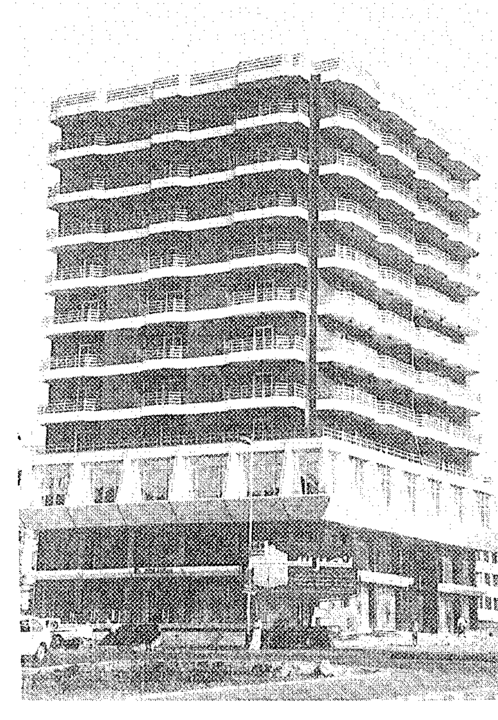
Commercial building, circa 1970



The 'modern' wekāla-rabaa, 1980

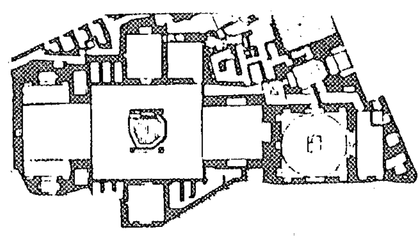


Madīnat Nasr: administrative building



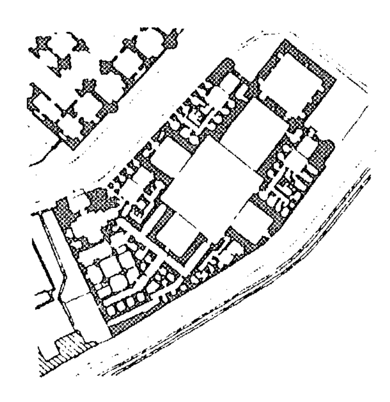
Khanqa

The khanqa is a "convent" for Sufis or "dervishes". It is a lodging, and a place for study and prayer. The building itself is arranged with the same elements as a madrasa: a mosque, rooms for study, cells for sleeping and working, a bath and kitchens, all organised around a central courtyard. Most of these buildings are presently unoccupied because they are attached to a mosque.



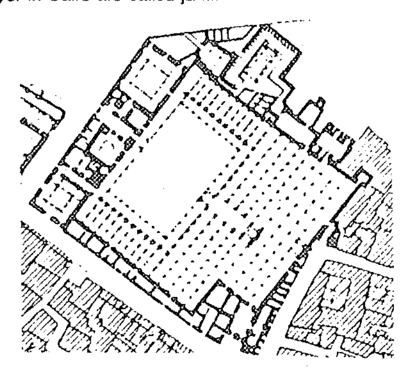
Madrasa

The madrasa was a theological school and a politcal institution. Usually it was a large square or rectangular building with a central interior court. It was nearly always connected to a mosque and composed of four iwāns, the largest of which is for prayer and the others used for study and as dormitories for students. It may even have a mausoleum included. The interior space is cruciform as a result of the four iwāns whereas the exterior is a square; between the 'arms' of the cross and the exterior enclosure are located the service rooms.



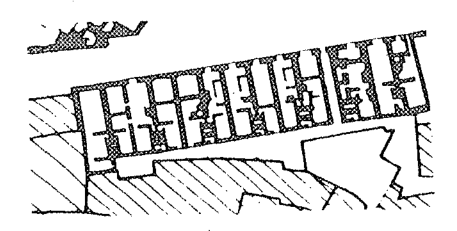
Mosque (masjid, jāmi*)*

Two types of mosque are to be found in Cairo. 1) Mosque with a court (al-Azhar, Ibn Tūlūn). 2) Mosque with iwāns, which has the same spatial configuration as a madrasa. The difference between the two names, masjid *and* jāmi *is not a typological one since* masjid *was employed to designate a place that served for daily prayers, whereas* jāmi *(assembly) indicates Friday prayers. Today, all places for prayer in Cairo are called* jāmi.



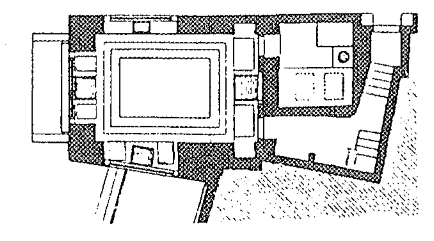
Rab'

The rab' was a type of collective dwelling peculiar to Egypt. It was designed to house people inside the city in a permanent fashion, generally the middle classes. Many rab' are still in use today, the ground floor being devoted to commercial and craft activities.



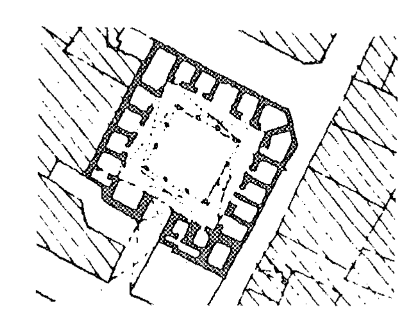
Sabīl-Kuttab

The sabīl-kuttab is a public fountain and Koranic school. It is a rather characteristic building found in Egypt. A sabīl-kuttab, as its name indicates is comprised by cistern for water at ground level, where people can obtain water free, and a school (also free) on the floor above and open directly onto the street. It may appear as an independent structure or belong to a group of madrasa, wakāla, and mausoleum.



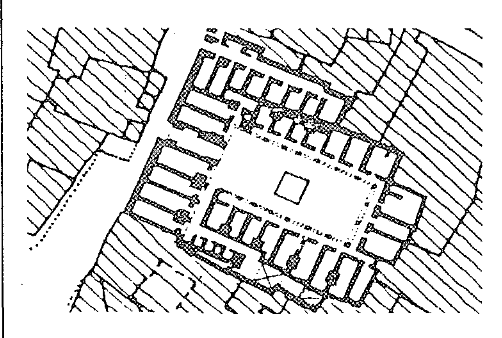
Takiya

The takiya is designed to lodge and provide free board for travellers or poor people. It is a square or rectangular building with an interior court. It has rooms giving directly onto the courtyard and a prayer hall as well. Presently these are used to house permanently the inhabitants of the old city.



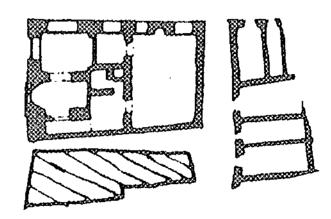
Wakala

The wakala is a type of facility for commercial and craft activities and for giving temporary shelter to travellers and merchants. It is a large square or rectangular enclosure with inner courtyard. Still in use today, the wakala is either entirely for craft and commercial business or for permanent habitation and work.



Zawiya

The zawiya is a "cultural sanctuary" or "chapel". The name can also mean a small mosque or oratory. It is also the mausoleum of a holy person, comprising a space where a certain number of students can assemble. As its name indicates (zawiya = angle of a building), it can be located inside the city, near a constructed edifice or in a cemetary.

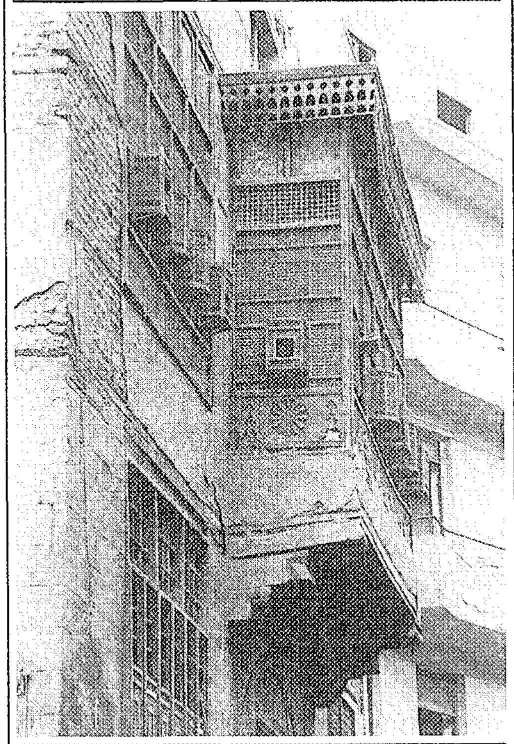


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The city of Cairo has been the focus of much research over many years. This brochure owes a great deal to these works. Nevertheless, it would be difficult for us to cite them all. We have provided only a few principal titles:

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641: Arab conquest, capital is Fusṭāṭ
661–750: Umayyads, capital is Fusṭāṭ
750–868: 'Abassids, capital is al-Askar
868–969: Tūlūnīds, capital is al-Qala'i
969–1171: Fātimids, capital is al-Qāhira
1171–1250: 'Ayyubids, capital is al-Qaala (the Citadel)
1250–1516: Mamluks, capital is al-Qāhira and al-Qaala.
1516–1798: Ottomans, capital al-Qāhira and al-Qaala.
1798–1801: French expedition
1805: Mohammad Ali, capital is Cairo.



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